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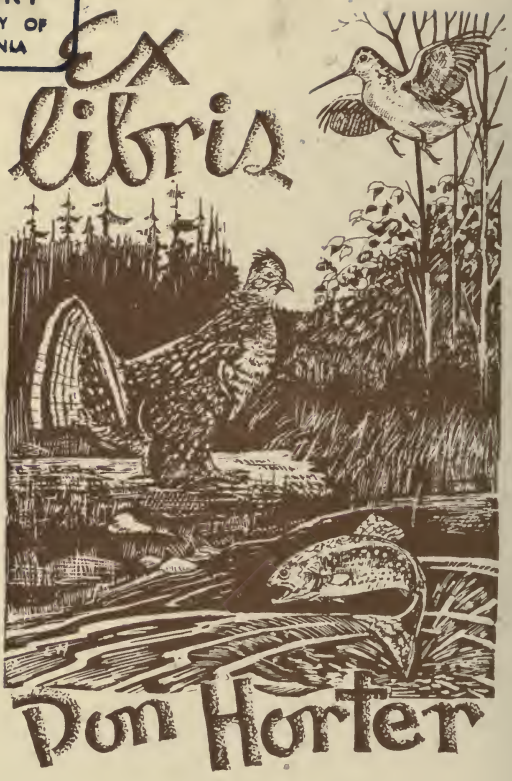

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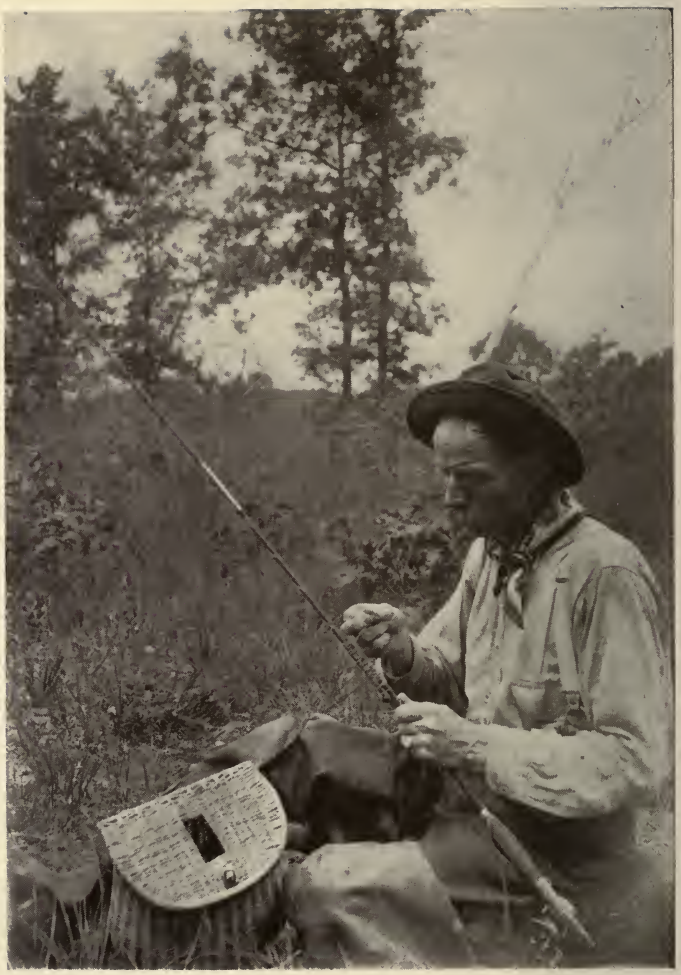
CASTING TACKLE AND METHODS



THE AUTHOR RENDERING FIRST AID TO A BADLY INJURED ROD

CASTING TACKLE AND METHODS

By
O. W. SMITH

Author of "Trout Lore,"
Angling Editor "Outdoor Life"

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TO

All Lovers of the Short Rod and Multiplying Reel, This Book is Affectionately Dedicated.

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FOREWORD

I am told that very few people read an introduction, a matter which I find it exceedingly difficult to believe, for often the introduction is the best part of a book; that is, when the introduction is not an apology for the book. I make no apology for sending out upon the great sea of books another volume dealing with bait casting as practiced with short rod and multiplying reel. It seems to me that there is room for another work, not too technical for the tyro, withal exact enough to prove of interest to the old hand. It is not enough for a man to know tackle; he must also know fish; therefore I have divided this book into two parts: Part I deals with tackle, while Part II treats of methods. In both divisions I have been as careful and painstaking as possible, repeating myself again and again for the sake of clearness.

In Part I, I begin with a frank discussion of the rod, its material, construction and length, answering the questions which have so frequently been asked through my department in Outdoor Life. Then I take up the modern bait casting reel, tracing its development from the old English single action. All

the illustrations are from photographs of reels in my collection, for mine is not a book knowledge but a knowledge gained from practical experience with the tools described in actual fishing. To make the book complete I discuss the care and protection of tackle, as well as repairs. In the matter of lures, my purpose is not to discuss the various lures, simply show the tendency in construction. I have a large collection of "plugs," gathered during the last ten years, all of which I have tried out, one by one, as secured. I made that statement some time ago and a critic remarked, "He (the author) must have been a fairly busy man." But ten years is a long time and one can accomplish a good deal if he only uses his spare moments. Undoubtedly my critic wastes more time in a single year than I have used in the study and try-out of lures during the past ten.

Surely it is hardly necessary for me to pause here and argue for the legitimacy of casting lures, though with my carping critic in mind I can not resist the temptation to devote a paragraph to the subject. When "Trout Lore" appeared a certain gentleman took issue with me in the matter of artificial lures for trout, going further and execrating the "murderous plugs" for any use whatsoever, and using choice Billingsgate to describe the angler who descends to their employment. It would be a pleasure to reply in kind, but that would only lower me to his level. No, a true sportsman will be a sportsman no matter

what tackle is employed, and the other kind will be the other kind e'en though he use the most approved outfit. Just as much skill is required to handle the short rod and multiplying reel properly as is brought into play by the user of the fly rod and single action winch. I can take more bass with flies when fishing a water where the fuzzy wuzzy lures may be employed, than I can by the use of "plugs." "Enough has always been as good as a feast", with me. I retire from lake or stream when I have a mess and one or two to give away. I hold that sportsmanship is a finer thing than tackle, it is the spirit of the rodster dominating his every thought and act. Some of the finest, cleanest sportsmen I know are users of "plugs." God bless them, every one.

In Part II, I take up methods, and after instructing briefly in the handling of rod and reel, I take the reader to lake and stream and fish with him, showing him, as best I may, how, when and where to throw his lure. And it is the fishing out under the blue sky, where the birds sing and the water murmurs, that makes angling the sport of sports. I love tackle, talk and write tackle, but it is the actual fishing which enraptures me. Better a day on a bass water than *two* cycles of Cathay. I fondly believe that it will be Part II that will hold the attention of the reader longest, though he will turn to the first half for information, and I hope that he will not be disappointed.

These chapters appeared in their original form in Outdoor Life, though readers of that magazine will not recognize them in their new dress, so changed and elaborated are they. All have been re-written, some changed entirely to meet modern discoveries. Always I have worked with the needs of anglers in mind, needs that have been made manifest to me through extended and wide correspondence. Last year I answered questions from no less than 600 bass fans throughout the United States and Canada. So the reader can see that while I have compiled the book, as it were, it is the many eager questioners who have actually written it. So it is proper that I dedicate it to them, not forgetting to thank the Editor of Outdoor Life for the privilege of publication in book form.

It has taken more than a year to prepare these chapters and illustrations. Day by day I have entered my study before breakfast, religiously preparing two pages of manuscript before partaking of the morning meal, so stealing from the day the necessary time for the work. And the work has been a great pleasure. Were it not for the fact that I have another book in mind, which I shall prepare in the same manner, I would feel lost. I am almost sorry the work is finished, I have enjoyed it so much. It truly has been my recreation. I would like to write it over once more, but that may not be. My dearest wish as I send it out into the world of angling liter-

ature is that here and there a fisherman may enjoy its reading one-half as much as I have its preparation.

May Good Fishing be yours and the East Wind never blow, is the prayerful wish of

THE AUTHOR

Evansville, Wisconsin, 1920.

PART I

CASTING TACKLE AND METHODS

CHAPTER I

THE BAIT-CASTING ROD

GENERAL REMARKS

No single article of the bait-caster's equipment is more earnestly and lengthily discussed than the rod, and perhaps there is nothing regarding which there is greater diversity of opinion. From the very nature of the subject this is bound to be true, there are so many materials employed in rod construction, so many different lengths and weights, not to mention the biases and predilictions of individual rodsters. "No two anglers ever agree," is a stock phrase.

Naturally, the rod that suits—"fits," if you prefer—one man, may not another; by the same token, the rod I find "best" upon one water or for a given variety of fishing, may not do at all under diverse circumstances. Therefore, write this sentence at the top of the first page of the angler's copy-book,

"There is no single *'best'* rod." Having said that, however, I hasten to add that I have my favorite rod and will defend its merits and super-excellencies just as long and as stoutly as any angler. As there is no unanimity of opinion amid anglers, the man seeking information finds himself "all at sea" when it comes to choosing a rod. I have letters on file from all over the United States and from several foreign countries, asking for advise regarding the selection of a rod for casting artificial lures; holding those letters in mind, I am going to write for the aid and information of the amateur, discussing in plain language the merits and demerits of the various styles and materials. I trust that the chapter will not prove tedious.

There has been considerable argument regarding the rise of the short casting rod, and notwithstanding some assertions to the contrary, I am inclined to agree with Mr. Samuel G. Camp's statement that the modern short casting rod had its birth near Chicago. Perhaps it had its rise *in* Chicago, for thirty years ago Mr. J. M. Clark, then of the "Windy City," now of Kansas City, Mo., had a short rod built for his personal use. In answer to a letter asking for information, Mr. Clark says:

"The first conception of the Short Bait Casting rod was made for me in 1885 by Fred D. Divine, now the Fred D. Divine Company, of Utica, New York. The rod was made out of lancewood, 6 feet, 3 inches long.

The rod was a revelation in those days, as the usual lengths of rods was 10½ feet. I fought the point and won out. To-day my banner rod is 5 feet, 6 inches."

At any rate, the short rod is a product of the West, and through sheer merit alone is making head even in the East. However, it is not uncommon to read articles even to-day urging the 6 foot, 6 inch caster. Such a rod is not, and from the very nature of the case, can not be a good caster of heavy "plugs." The short rod was born of necessity, not, as has been asserted, because of peculiar fishing conditions in the Middle West, but because it is the logical, natural tool for handling modern lures. As it is the "natural tool" it is bound to make head wherever familiar fish are to be won with a cast lure. However, we must not forget to mention Mr. James A. Henshall, "the father of the black bass," for to him we owe the modern rod, though so far as I know, he nowhere recommends the short caster; the "Henshall pattern" is a rod 8¼ feet long, and therefore is not adapted to handling lures with the overhead cast. As evolved by the Doctor, the tool was intended for casting live bait and will be treated in another volume dealing with that branch of angling. I mention Henshall's rod here because it was the first real "casting rod," the fore-runner of all modern casters.

As I have already said or intimated, the short rod is the best and coming tool. I was one of the last of

Middle Western anglers to take up the short rod. I well remember how the brotherhood of bass fans jumped on me for advocating the 6-foot-6-inch caster, that, when perhaps nine out of ten were using something less than a 5-foot tool. I would not give up. I could not be convinced. I was sure that the short rod could have but little if any action. I asserted over and over again that the function of the rod was to play the fish, not to serve as a reel holder simply. But in spite of my prejudices I became convinced. Gradually, almost inch by inch, I cut off the tip of my favorite rod, metaphorically speaking, until to-day my favorite tool measures exactly 5 feet. Perhaps I shall cut away 6 inches more, though I much doubt it. Hereby I recommend the 5 foot rod for all lure casting. (Parenthetically: later on we will find a use for that "6 foot, 6 inch" rod.) I would not have the reader for a moment think that I have come to the use of the 5 foot rod without much thought and experimentation. Grudgingly, almost reluctantly, I have given up my preconceived notions one by one, compelled to do so by actual experiments and fishing experiences. I write not as a study-angler: lake and stream have been my laboratory. My tackle cabinet contains rods of many lengths, of various materials, from many workshops; one by one I have tried them out, experimented with them upon bass, pike and muskellunge, and to-day I am ready to give you the results.

I have said that the 5 foot rod possesses "action," that resiliency which marks the difference between a "rod" and a "stick." Somewhere I once read some such statement as this: "I had just as soon go fishing with my reel attached to an umbrella handle as to use one of the modern short *sticks* erroneously dubbed a rod." Manifestly the writer was so prejudiced that he could not be convinced, or had never handled a well-made casting rod. In my cabinet I have a number of rods 5 feet long, any one of which will respond quickly to the wish of the angler or surge of the fish. The uninitiated would be surprised to witness the action of these rods when engaged with a fighting bass or obstreperous pike. Their resiliency, quickness, responsiveness—to borrow a word, "humanness," is almost passing belief. You must have action as well as backbone in order to cast a lure effectively and effectually. You cannot cast well with an umbrella-handle!

I grant all that has been said regarding the necessity for action when landing a fish—I have said considerable myself—but I here assert that action is as essential in casting. A rod should not be weak and flabby, that goes without saying, it must be able to stand on its own dignity: but just the same, it must possess some of that whip-like quality in order to shoot and control the lure. A rod over 5½ feet long loses in backbone and control in exact ratio as it gains in whippiness. Whippiness is not action, the

two must never be confused. The tyro, the would-be caster, from very necessity must take much upon faith, and when a man like the writer urges a short rod, admits that only after long experimentation came to the use of it himself, after prejudice had been knocked out by experience, the tyro surely will believe him. Therefore and consequentially, once again the 5 foot, and 5½ foot rod is hereby recommended. Do not go over the 5½ rod for handling artificial lures. For ordinary live bait casting I use the same rod, though for still fishing and certain varieties of live bait casting I use one somewhat longer; but more of this matter later, when we shall devote a whole chapter to the subject.

ROD MATERIAL

The man unacquainted with the subject little realizes what a vast field opens for discussion when we take up the question of rod material. I might dismiss the matter with but a word or two, as do so many angling writers, giving my first, second and third choice, say, with reasons therefor; but that would hardly satisfy the tyro or the eager angler, the one who wishes to know if a certain wood has been tried out by rod builders, and with what success.

Naturally it will be impossible for the writer to treat the subject exhaustively in the brief compass of this chapter, but he will at least give the reader the result of his personal experiments. However, let

me say, the average amateur, the one for whom this chapter is especially written, probably cannot afford to experiment with various woods; he wants a rod, then let him purchase in the light of the information which others' experience has acquired. Again I must pause to say, let the angler buy the very best rod he can afford. Better far purchase one good rod than two cheap ones, though it is of utmost importance to carry two rods if going on a long or hard trip where one might be broken. The whole world is being ransacked these days for rod material, little known as well as familiar woods are being employed by curious and ambitious amateur workmen, until it is almost impossible to mention a wood that some one has not tried out. Not all of these woods deserve mention, because not of sufficient importance. We will confine our discussion, with one or two exceptions, to the materials most frequently used, mentioning them in the order of their importance.

Without fear of successful contradiction I give split-bamboo first place. There is no known wood equal to well selected and cured bamboo. I have handled many rods of various materials, good rods, too, but it must be said that the well made split-bamboo possesses a fine action, quick responsiveness, and casting power unequalled by any other material. Note, I said "well made," for a cheaply made split-bamboo is a delusion and a snare, a poor proposition.

There is a difference, however, between a cheap and a cheaply-made rod. You can secure a dependable, fine actioned caster in split-bamboo for the reasonable sum of $5.00. I know a $3.00 rod that has rendered efficient service for several years, standing up under the hardest strain to which a rod can be subjected, black-bass casting, and yet it is apparently good for many more years. Of course the rod has received care, the secret of any rod's lastibility. Do not imagine that because your rod is not an expensive one you can afford to neglect it; the low-priced rod requires greater care than does the high grade tool, though often because it cost little money, receives none.

While a serviceable caster can be purchased for $3.00, I urge the selection of one costing $5.00 or $6.00; it will prove enough better; while, for the man who can afford it, there is the tool costing from $15.00 up, and up. However, for $15.00 you can get a split-bamboo beautiful enough, good enough, serviceable enough, capable enough for the most expert caster and exacting nimrod.

The split-bamboo is built in hexagonal and octagonal shape, from six and eight strips of wood. I lean toward the six-sided rod, less joints for the water to seek out, though undoubtedly the eight-sided rod, if carefully made, furnishes the more perfect action. Some anglers incline to the belief that the solid wood rod will stand more rough usage than

the split-bamboo. I do not agree with them. I have yet to break my first split-bamboo caster, and I possess them in various grades, ranging from $3.00 up to $25.00. Ounce for ounce and caliber for caliber, I regard the split-bamboo away ahead of any solid wood rod which I have ever been permitted to use. Much more might be said regarding this premier material, but there are several other materials to mention and space will be at a premium before this chapter is completed.

I am going to give the steel rod second place, for I regard steel, in bait casting rods at least, as second only to split-bamboo. I am well aware that many rodsters will not agree with me, but with the needs of the amateur in mind, the steel rod must be given what I regard as its rightful place. Few anglers realize what wonderful strides have been made in the manufacture of steel rods during the last few years. While not possessed of the perfect action of the high-grade split-bamboo, and somewhat heavier than the solid wood, the high grade steel—and there are any number of cheap grades in all conscience—for rough and ready work is hard to beat. Do not by any means take me to mean that the rod is designed only for rough work; it is nice enough for any one, gotten up in an expensive manner if you care to pay the price. Take as an illustration that Bristol de Luxe, wound with silk, mounted with agate guides set in German silver. The rod is a

beauty, resilient, yet possessed of sufficient back-bone, and light enough for comfortable casting. Though not the most expensive—it sells at $25.00—it is one of the most striking rods in my battery.

I possess another steel caster for which I paid, I think, $15.00, and when I say that it is a good rod in every sense of the word, I mean just that. The man who speaks contemptuously of the "steel pole," is hardly fair, probably unacquainted with a truly high grade steel caster. I realize just what it means to go on record as defending the steel rod, but rods as well as his satanic majesty, should have just due. I would as soon think of going on a long wilderness trip without my two favorite split-bamboos as without my steel. I often worry about the treatment my bamboos are receiving when upon a hard treck, but have never lost a wink of sleep over my Bristol. Naturally the steel is not possessed of the fine action and quick responsiveness, neither will it shoot the lure as far as will the bamboo or solid wood; but dollar for dollar, I am certain that in the lower priced rods you will secure greater value for your outlay. Writes a correspondent: "I have been attending tournaments for several years and I have yet to see my first steel upon the platform." Perhaps the statement is true, but if so it proves nothing. Unfortunately tournament casting is not fishing, and therefore is not the real test of a rod's quality. There is another reason why the steel is a convenient

rod to own, but we will discuss that matter later on.

Every angler knows the story of the three countrymen, who, when visiting a menagerie for the first time, stopped in front of the elephant in open mouthed astonishment. Finally one of them gasped: "Don't be fooled by it, fellows, there ain't no such animal." So when we turn to the so-called "noib-wood," we are compelled to confess that it does not exist. The truth of the matter is, noib-wood is but selected bethabara, or washaba. There are many stories regarding the origin of the name, one of the best being that the word noyb—it is sometimes spelled that way—stands for the words "none of your business," the reply made by the manufacturers to eager inquirers regarding the material. Granted that the material is but selected bethabara, if carefully selected and well made, the product is a rod of which the possesser well may be proud. Says Mr. S. G. Camp—"I have used one of them a great deal and may say unreservedly that they are the finest casting rods in the market; that is, in solid wood." Perhaps it will not be hard for the reader to understand why Mr. H. P. Wells and Mr. Perry D. Frazer are silent regarding the material, a little matter which puzzled me for some time. A finely selected "noïb-wood" rod is a beautiful and splendid tool but unfortunately many a cheap grade of bethabara is placed upon the market as a noib rod. So we leave this would-be aristocrat amid solid woods

and turn our attention to the material sailing under its own colors, a material, grade for grade, somewhat cheaper than split-bamboo.

Bethabara, or washaba, is the best easily obtained wood for solid rods. I doubt if this assertion can be successfully contradicted. If you desire a solid wood rod and are willing to pay from $10 up, by all means invest in a bethabara, and the word of my experience for it, you will never regret the outlay. In color, the polished wood resembles butternut, making a very handsome tool, and in this case at least, "Handsome is as handsome does." The wood comes from British Guiana where it is a common tree attaining a height of 100 feet or more. So highly is the tough wood regarded by the natives that it is employed by them in the manufacture of bows, as which it renders lasting and efficient service. The wood is unusually heavy. Wells gives its specific gravity as 1.2140, which would preclude its use for casting rods were it not for its exceeding toughness, because of which rods can be made of small caliber, commensurate in weight with bamboo. Bethabara rods are exceedingly powerful and lively, good casters as well as "good lookers." However, the owner should keep the tool thoroughly varnished for the wood may be warped by changes in temperature or through careless handling, though bethabara is not as prone to offend in this manner as is lancewood; however, any rod, solid wood especially, may warp—

"set"—from heedless or careless handling, a matter which the rodster should bear in mind.

True greenheart grows only in British Guiana, where immense forests of the trees are to be found, and, by the way, greenheart timber is the chief export of the island. Dutch Guiana also boasts of greenheart, but the tree so named is thought to be a different species from that of the one found in British Guiana. Greenheart is said to be the hardest wood known to dendrologists, and more durable than steel or iron when buried in water or placed in contact with the soil. Logs of the wood have remained under water for 100 years and have kept in perfectly sound condition. It is largely used for lock gates and our navy is said to be investigating its possibilities as an armor-backing material in the place of teak wood now used. If greenheart be, as is said, the strongest timber in use, with a crushing strength of 12,000 pounds to the square inch, 65 per cent. greater than that of English oak, what wonder that rod makers early turned their attention to the material?

In greenheart we have an excellent rod material, Wells ranking it above bethabara, and I think for the amateur rod maker it deserves that place, for it is more easily worked as well as procured; but in the matter of "toughness"—resiliency and shooting power—I believe that bethabara should be given first position, with greenheart a close second. How-

ever, I must confess that I have found greenheart quite apt to "set" under provocation, more inclined to the habit, I think, than is bethabara, though not all anglers and rod makers agree with me. It is somewhat lighter than the former wood and therefore rods can be of larger caliber without materially increasing the weight, a little matter which recommends it to certain rodsters, for naturally the heavier the rod the heavier strain it will endure. The greenheart is a good rod and cheap, a well made caster being procurable for $6.00 and up. You will make no mistake in investing in a greenheart.

I am not a lover of lancewood casting rods, that in spite of their cheapness and beauty. I have had trouble with their "setting" under hard service, even atmospheric changes at times working havoc with them. Recently I built one with double guides, guides upon either side of the rod, so that I could use one side one day and the other the next. It has worked well. My rod is with the separate reel-seat, the first joint consisting of handle and reel-seat only, as would be necessary. Lancewood casters have the questionable virtue of being cheap, consequentially it is more difficult to secure a real good lancewood than it is to secure a perfect rod of more expensive material. Perhaps the wood is not receiving its just due these days for it undoubtedly has gone out of fashion; one seldom sees a lancewood casting rod on lake or stream, that in spite of its reasonable price.

I have a salt-water rod in lancewood, double-guided (it was this rod, by the way, which suggested a double-guided casting rod), that has never shown any tendency to warp, but then, it is of exceedingly large caliber. If the owner of a lancewood would suspend the rod from the tip with a weight attached at the butt, when not in use, he would find that it would go far to correct any tendency to "set" which the rod might have manifested. And, in passing, it is a good plan to administer a dose of the same medicine to any wood rod, the most aristocratic split-bamboo not excepted. It is exceedingly difficult to correct a warped rod that has been neglected for any length of time, therefore the wise angler is quick to suspend his rod as directed above as soon as a hint of "set" is manifested.

Anglers are always on the lookout for rod material, always experimenting, usually disappointed, though often thinking that they have made an important discovery. In the foregoing paragraphs we have mentioned the most generally used materials, and there remains but to speak of a few others sometimes employed. Ironwood makes a good rod, somewhat heavy, it is true, liable to fracture and not possessed of great casting power; however, I am not altogether satisfied with my experiments, having thus far found it exceedingly difficult to secure good sections of the material. I can not help believing that ironwood is one of the best of the occasionally used

American woods. So far I have found the rod must be of no inconsiderable caliber in order to secure sufficient backbone and shooting power.

Two years ago a friend sent me three sticks of western yew (*Taxus brevifolia, Nutt*), a tough, straight grained wood, employed by the Indians of the North-west for bows; which I made up into a casting rod, finishing it in its natural color, and it made a beautiful caster. I have not had sufficient opportunity to try it out, but thus far the rod has stood up well. It has an unusual amount of backbone and shooting power, and has not the tendency to "set" that most native woods manifest, though it does become bent under hard service. I do not profess that this yew is the long sought native rod material, but I do claim for it the respectful attention of rod makers. I doubt that it will ever be used for fly rods to any great extent but it does make up into very good short casting rods.

Hickory has been used for ages in this country; by the Indians for bows, by the ox-drivers for goad-sticks, by the wood-choppers for axe-helves, in fact it has been employed wherever a tough, pliable wood has been required. However, it is not a success as a rod material, for while it is tough enough it lacks backbone, is too whippy, and "sets" almost at the first cast. One peculiarity of my hickory rod is that it seems to be influenced by climatic changes, even though stored away in my rod-cabinet. The weight

of the wood prevents constructing a rod of sufficient caliber to obviate setting.

Ash deserves only a word, for, while it is light it is not sufficiently tough for the work required of a casting rod. Good for first joints, butts, and that is all. If you are building a rod and desire to eliminate every superfluous ounce, build the butt joint of ash and the tip of yew: it makes a good combination.

Osage orange is sometimes used by amateur workers but manufacturers hardly consider it worthy of notice, though Wells hoped "that here we may find a domestic material equal, if not superior, to most of the foreign woods," and quotes Mr. D. J. Brown as follows: "The wood of the Machura (*Osage orange*) is of a bright yellow color, somewhat resembling the fustic, and like the wood of that tree, it is said, affords a yellow dye. It is solid, heavy, durable, uncommonly fine grained, and elastic; and on account of the latter property it is used for bows by all the tribes of the Indians of the region where it abounds. When wrought it receives a beautiful polish of the appearance and brilliancy of satinwood." Personally I have not experimented with it, but a number of my correspondents have, and report varying degrees of success. I am not ready to recommend it.

The great problem one faces when experimenting with native woods is the difficulty of securing properly cut and cured material. Perhaps that is the

reason why the average rod maker seldom tries out, or at least reports trying out, native stock. There is rare fun in experimenting with new rod materials, a discovery which every amateur workman should make, and so long as we can not find such rods upon the market, we, perforce, must learn to build them for ourselves. As aids to rod making I would urge my reader to secure Frazer's "The Angler's Workshop," and Wells' "Fly Rods and Fly Tackle."

NUMBER OF JOINTS

When it comes to discussing the number of joints into which the casting rod may be divided there is a great diversity of opinion, though there is no question but that the one piece rod is the ideal. Far and away the best wood rod, no matter what the material, is the one made from a single piece of wood. This can not be successfully contradicted. It stands to reason, if given a perfect section of rod material, solid wood or split-bamboo, with grain running from hand-grasp to tip-top, well built and accurately mounted, that such a rod will possess better action than the one made up of two or more sections. Wherever a ferrule is introduced is a point of weakness, all can see that. I am a believer in and a lover of the one piece rod. I own one which I honestly think it would be impossible for any maker to excel, so perfect is it in action and "feel;" the hand-grasp, eight inches long, slips from the rod,

aside from which it is made from six strips of choice bamboo, perfectly joined together. I know of no rod its equal. Were action the only matter for us to consider, the discussion of the number of joints would cease right here, but unfortunately there are several other elements entering into the problem.

The chief reason why we build our casting rods with two or more sections is simply a matter of convenience. It is hard to imagine a more difficult article to pack or "tote" than a slender, easily broken stick, 5 feet, 6 inches long. It will refuse to enter a trunk, will not slip under an auto or buggy seat, and is in every one's way on board train. Always the owner is haunted with the fear of a broken rod, some one may step on it if placed on the floor, and in the tent it is more in the way than a poodle dog. But in the boat, when bass are rising, or long and difficult casts are required, its possession is a pure and unalloyed pleasure. For the home or permanent fishing camp, by all means the one piece rod, but for convenience in transporting, something else.

There is another reason why it is the part of wisdom to build rods with more than one section. It is exceedingly difficult to procure material "clear" enough and straight enough to make a rod all one piece. Every amateur rod maker has discovered that a strip of bamboo ofttimes may be cut to advantage, leaving out knots and blemishes which make for weakness; consequentially the short joint rod

may, nay, should possess better material, price for price. However, I urge you to note the suggestion of doubt conveyed in the last half of the foregoing sentence. The fact of the matter is, all depends upon the maker producing the rod, some apparently being satisfied when they have placed a rod upon the market, while others think of quality first and sales afterward.

Do not think to pay less than $15.00 for a one piece rod, a good one can not be built for less, and as much more as you can afford. Twenty-five dollars is not an exorbitant price for a high grade caster, if built in one piece. Rod No. 2 in the illustration is priced at $15.00, and to me represents about the last word in rod making for the money. If it were not for the matter of convenience in transportation, as pointed out in a preceding paragraph, it is the only split-bamboo I would recommend for bass fishing. And $15.00 is quite a sum to pay for a short rod.

Granted, then, that by and large it is the part of wisdom to purchase a jointed caster, how many joints should it possess? The answer will depend upon your desires. If you want a rod that can be carried in a suit-case, you must get one with three joints; but if you are willing to carry the rod-case in your hand, I would recommend the two piece rod by all means. Remember, in the wood rod, when we introduce a ferrule we introduce weakness, the more ferrules the greater the weakness. No ferrule is elastic,

nor indeed can be, hence the rod breaks; if it breaks, nine times out of ten, at the ferrule; just above or below, usually below. This tendency is overcome to a degree by using serrated ferrules, a matter to be discussed later on, but even the serrated ferrule will not insure a rod against heavy strain.

Where shall we place the ferrule in a two piece rod, or rather, what shall be the relative length of the two joints? I have experimented at some length during the past few years and have found my experiments quite costly, but as a result I am ready to affirm that there is but one best construction for the two piece caster, viz., short butt and long tip. The farther down the rod we place the ferrule, or in other words, the longer the tip, all else being equal, the stronger the rod. Let the butt be rather stocky but not actionless, though you should look to the long tip for resiliency and casting power. The butt will never break, the tip may, therefore, always carry an extra one. Parenthetically: some of my two piece rods have been in active service for upwards of ten years, and to date, none of them have broken or shown signs of weakness.) The butt should be about 26½ inches long, including the ferrule; and the tip 35 inches, including ferrule and tip-top. When assembled the rod is exactly 5 feet long. We lose an inch and a half ferrule insertion. Practically the ideal caster will be—"two to three"—that is, the butt two feet and the tip three; though actually, there

may be a variation of an inch or two. So, second to the one piece rod, is the two piece, long tip, short butt construction.

As has been emphasized already, the only reason for the three piece rod is the matter of convenience. There are times when to slip a casting rod into a suit-case is a convenience indeed. In the wood rod I regard the three piece rod as stronger than the two piece when both butt and tip are of equal length, the added ferrule being more than off-set by the position of the ferrule in the middle of the two piece. I think no argument will be necessary here. However, by actual tests I have convinced myself that the three piece rod can not stand up under the same strain that the two piece rod—long tip and short butt construction—will endure without harm. I do not want you to understand me as saying that the three piece rod is not a good tool. I have one with joints 27 inches long, a 6-foot-6 rod when assembled, that is all that the most fastidious and particular crank could require; naturally the unusual length adds somewhat to its strength, but even in the 5 foot length, if well made, it would prove satisfactory. Just the same, I am not advising even high grade split-bamboo casters in the three piece style; the two piece is best.

If for the sake of convenience you need a three piece rod, then invest in a high grade steel, than which there is nothing better. Obviously the material from which the rod is made lends itself admir-

ably to division. I came near saying that you might cut it up into coat-pocket lengths without harm, though that is nonsense. Take that Bristol No. 33 as an illustration: three joints 18 inches long, and a handle 12¼; when assembled the rod is exactly 4 feet, 11 inches in length, called for convenience a 5 foot rod. (Of course it can be secured in other lengths.) If the reader has been figuring upon the length of each joint, he may wonder where so many inches are lost; but when informed that the female ferrules chamber 2½ inches each, the enigma is solved; a fact, by the way, which adds greatly to the strength of the rod. Strictly speaking the steel rod is ferruleless, for one can not call the strengthening phospher-bronze bands ferrules. The rod of which I write is in no sense an "iron pole," nor yet is it cheap; sells, I believe, for $15.00, German silver and agate mounted. "If it breaks"? Of course there is ever that haunting fear. But suppose the horse should run away, suppose the auto should turn turtle, the train go into the ditch, the boat sink, etc., etc. I have never broken a steel rod, but I have always used good ones. Do not buy a department-store, 99 cent rod.

There is a steel caster upon the market called the "De Luxe" which should be mentioned here, though in truth it deserves more than mere mention. It is rightly named. It is de luxe from tip-top to butt-cap. The makers have spared no pains to produce

as perfect a rod as it is possible to build from steel, and have wound it with the best of silk, laid on with loving care. Mountings are German silver and agate. Undoubtedly the winding gives added strength, and if kept thoroughly shellaced, to exclude water, the rod will unquestionably render lifelong service. While not wound in order to conceal the material, to the casual observer, the rod is taken for some solid wood, or round split-bamboo. A number of times I have asked rodsters to name the material from which the De Luxe is made and very seldom indeed has one suggested steel. However, as intimated a moment ago, the purpose of the winding is not to deceive, but to add strength and beauty. Any user of a steel rod need not be ashamed of his caster, much less the user of the De Luxe.

I believe that I have said more in defense of steel as a rod material than any angling writer, and I am the owner and proud user of a number of split-bamboo and solid wood rods. "Why do I devote so much space to the steel?" Simply because the rod is making head in spite of its critics, winning through sheer merit, and this work must supply the information the amateur seeks. I am trying to give an unbiased opinion of the steel rod. I have no axe to grind, surely it is unnecessary for me to say that.

Now to return to the subject we were discussing a moment ago. Like a great many angling topics, the last word will never be said regarding the correct

number of joints, for no two anglers are in perfect agreement. Bear in mind the point which has been emphasized a number of times already, all depends upon the particular work to which you are going to put your rod. Remember, there is no such thing as a "general purpose rod," supply catalogs to the contrary notwithstanding. If I were limited to a single casting rod I would select a split-bamboo, long tip and short butt construction; but I am glad I am not, that I can have my Bristol No. 33 for hand-bag use, and the De Luxe for muskellunge fishing, where I desire strength and enjoy beauty also. Remember all that has been said regarding steel as the material for the rough and ready rod, the rod to carry day in and day out when the trail is rough and the going bad.

Recently there appeared upon the market a rod with two tips of different lengths and weight, fitting the same handle; the idea being to supply two rods at the price of one. It is a beautiful, well made bamboo, and stands up remarkably well under hard service. The short tip gives the angler a stocky rod for casting heavy lures, handling southern bass and great northern pike; the long tip provides him with a light, actionable rod adapted to handling light lures and ideal for ordinary northern bass casting. The rod sells in various grades from $3.00 to $15.00. I am surprised that makers have not hit upon the idea for all casting rods. Some amateur

builders have built themselves rods with two or more tips of different lengths and weights but now the man who lacks time or inclination to build can secure such a rod from the market. I commend the tool to serious fishermen.

MOUNTINGS

By rod mountings we mean everything attached to the joints—butt-cap, hand-grasp, reel-seat, ferrules, guides and tip-top. We may set it down as a general rule that nothing should be added to a rod for the sake of mere beauty, though even that should be taken with a wee bit of Attic salt. However, utility and durability should be our watchwords. To illustrate: I advocate German silver in all metal parts, not simply because silver is more handsome, but because it renders more lasting service. I am not saying that the windings of a rod should not be "foxy" if you have a penchant for that variety of ornamentation, or that you should not have your steel rod enameled in any other color save that of black: if you desire green, blue, or what not, that is your affair. However, I think that a strikingly ornamented rod may have a tendency to frighten an overly shy fish, though perhaps there is little danger on this score in bait casting, whatever may be true of fly-fishing. This is the point I desire to make, never surrender quality to appearance. But more regarding this matter as we take up the various mountings.

Three materials are used for ferrules, and we mention them in the order of their value: brass, nickel and German silver. The first we dismiss with but a word, do not employ it. Nickel is better and more sightly, but unfortunately in course of time the plating wears away and the ferrules present a very unsatisfactory appearance. For a little more money one can secure German silver, a durable and beautiful material. German silver is hereby recommended for all rod mountings.

As to the type of ferrule to employ, personally I prefer the welted and capped, with caps "serrated" or split, so that the winding can be brought up over the saw-tooth-like ends. It is my belief that wood rods are not so apt to break at the ferrule when the metal is serrated as there is a wee bit of elasticity at the danger point. The "welt" at the end of the ferrul strengthens the edge, and should never be omitted. The center should have a closed end. It is true that all good rods are to-day equipped with capped and welted ferrules, closed end centers, whether or not they are serrated; but in ordering, it is part of wisdom to know what you want and why you want it, then make your specifications.

Guides are made in many shapes, and while probably there is no "best" shape, still I have found that the more simple the guide the better it will satisfy. One sometimes sees casting rods equipped with trumpet guides, but upon the whole I prefer the

narrow, raised, off-set agate guide. It is better to have the rod equipped throughout with agate, but at any rate the first guide and tip-top should be of that material. Agate reduces friction to the minimum and therefore not only increases the caster's distance, but also prevents wear upon the line. As agate guides are somewhat expensive the caster is sometimes under the necessity of finding a substitute, and adamant is recommended. Shun all "gingerbread" work and unduly large guides, either will prove an abomination. First guides need not be over a quarter of an inch in diameter—inside measurement—the second slightly smaller. I would not place over two, aside from the tip-top, upon a five foot rod. The more guides, the greater the friction and wear upon the line. Personally I want plenty of room between the reel and first guide—about 24 inches—but if you do not care for that "play room," then use three guides, the first about 6 inches from the reel. Undoubtedly the third guide adds something to the strength of the rod. I think if I were selecting a steel or solid wood rod I would prefer three guides, and am under the impression that they are generally so equipped.

We may dismiss the tip-top with a brief paragraph, for all that has been said regarding guides applies to it. The material should undoubtedly be German silver, if possible agate lined. I would not employ the so-called "guarded tip," a wire upon

either side the tip to guide the line into the ring; I can not see that it serves any good purpose, simply adds to line-friction and in no wise strengthens the tip. These guarded tips are supplied in many shapes, but after trying out a number I have gone back to the old, simple angle top, than which I am firmly convinced there is none better.

When we turn to the reel-seat and hand-grasp, there is room for discussion, for there are many forms of both upon the market. The reel-seat should be of metal, preferably German silver. The purpose of the reel-seat is to hold the reel in position, and if it fails to do that it has no place upon the rod. Get that firmly in mind—the reel is to be held securely. Unless the reel-band is held down by a finger-hook, to be discussed in the next paragraph, the reel-band will work up in casting, releasing the reel, to obviate which rod-makers have resorted to many expedients. One maker has produced a rod with a separable reel-seat, so to speak; the handle is pulled out to insert the reel, then shoved home and locked in position by a little pin which slips into a hole in the reel-seat. Needless to add, once in place, the reel can not possibly fall out, neither can it work up the reel-slot.

Other makers have arranged reel-bands with locking devices of various sorts, more or less efficient, from a set-screw to a band so arranged that it fastens by a simple turn to the left or right. Let the would-

be purchaser of a rod bear in mind that this locking reel-band must lock, or he will be driving ineffective wooden "toggles" beneath the band to the effacement of the reel-seat. It is almost impossible to wedge a loose reel into position. I have often wondered why rod-makers do not reverse the reel-seat, following the reel with the band instead of preceding it, then the reel would pull into position instead of out. I have experimented somewhat with a reversed reel-seat with flattering results.

More than one amateur had thrown his rod away, or had it dragged from his hand by an unusually heavy fish. I knew a man not so long ago who purchased a fine steel rod one evening, and at the very first cast the next morning threw the whole outfit, including a $25.00 reel, out into thirty feet of water. It is there yet, I guess, for to the best of my knowledge it was never recovered, though many a small boy wasted happy hours fishing for it. A simple finger-hook would have obviated the accident. As intimated above, a finger-hook attached to the reel-band, acts as an efficient lock, the finger holds the reel in place. Personally, I do not like the finger-hook however, as it has a tendency to cause cramp in the caster's fore-finger. The Bristol people make a detachable finger-hook which is a good thing, as it can be removed without trouble. I have given you the "why" of the finger-hook, and it accomplishes the

thing for which designed, though for the reason just given I do not use it.

In the matter of hand-grasps there is a wide range of selection, both in form and material. I strongly prefer the double style, though a good many anglers use the single. In reeling in, the left hand naturally grasps the rod by the forward grip, the thumb and fore-finger laying the line. As it adds to the beauty and symmetry of the rod as well as to its serviceableness, the only indictment which can be brought against it is the matter of weight, an infinitesimal item. Should you try out two rods, one with a forward hand-grasp, the other without, and like both equally well, my advice would be, select the one with the forward grip. The hand-grasp itself should be "soft" to the hand, otherwise the rodster will find his hand growing sore after continued casting. After experimenting with many materials I gladly give first place to cork; it offers sufficient grip, is not harsh to the hand, and when made of select material, is durable. The veneered cork hand-grasp is almost worthless, as it is certain to crack and peel under service. The grasp should be constructed of cork rings, firmly glued together over a wood core, the method employed in constructing all better grade rods. I think I would give second place to the solid wood handle, though somewhat heavier than cork and the other materials used. The celluloid wound handle is pleasant to the feel, but liable to break. The cord

wound handle is harsh to the hand and also liable to disaster. I am so much in favor of the solid cork handle that I am going to leave the question by urging the angler to invest in a rod provided with a hand-grasp of that material, knowing full well that he will later "rise up and call me blessed."

There remains to consider the butt-cap, the end of the rod, and we will have finished our discussion of this important implement. Material—German silver, of course. It should be of sufficient weight to resist banging—abuse—without denting. A little judicious "milling" adds to its appearance. There is no advantage that I can see in having a "screw-off" butt-cap unless you have a "reversible handle," obviously out of place on a casting rod, for the reel will never be used below the hand. If we were dealing with a live bait rod, we might find use for the reel below the hand under certain conditions.

So I bring to a conclusion our discussion of the rod. I have tried to be perfectly fair in my presentation of the matter, though undoubtedly I am more or less opinionated—all anglers are. As I have said again and again, in the foregoing pages, I have simply recorded the results of my own experiments and experiences. I love the short rod and casting reel. More skill is required to properly handle them than many a fly-fisher realizes. Not "any old stick will do for a bait-casting rod," as one contemptuous correspondent asserts, but it must be constructed on

scientific principles so that it will not only respond to the surge of the fish, but also to the impulse and whim of the angler. The good casting rod is almost sentient.

Whether you select split-bamboo, a solid wood, or a steel, select as good and well mounted a caster as you can afford. See that it has the backbone and resiliency necessary, without which it will indeed be but "a stick." And lastly, as the preachers say, let it be one that "feels right" in your hand; that is, a rod that fits *you*.

CHAPTER II

THE CASTING REEL

HISTORY

In no single item of the bait-caster's outfit has there been greater development than in the reel. It is a long journey from the first single action winder down through the years to the modern quadruple, self-winding, self-thumbing, self-a-hundred-and-one-other-things reel.

Just where and when the fishing reel originated we know not, but we find mention of it in "The Complete Angler"; says Isaak Walton: "And to that end, some use a wheel about the middle of the rod, or near the hand; which is to be observed better by seeing one of them, than by a large demonstration of words." Presumably Walton had no personal knowledge of the "wheel," otherwise he would have been more explicit in his description. This first winch was undoubtedly after the fashion of the "Nottingham reel," still used in England, a large disk of wood with a grooved outer edge to contain the line; simple and efficient for the work for which

it was intended, fly fishing. To-day the single action reel has diminished in size and is made of many materials, but still it follows closely the pattern of the first winch produced. From the very nature of the case this is bound to be true. Little is required of the fly fisherman's reel, ordinarily it is but a spool on which the line is stored, so obviously no great development may be expected, no radical changes looked for.

The invention of the multiplying reel, the casting reel, *per se,* was coincident with the discovery of the black-bass as a sporting asset. As the short rod was born to meet new fishing conditions, so the multiplying reel was produced to satisfy the demand for something different to meet the wiles of a fish that fought differently, could be taken with different methods.

The multiplying reel was born down in "the blue grass country" in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Probably Mr. George Snyder, of Paris, Ky., produced the first double multiplying reel between the years 1810 and 1840, a crude creation when compared to a modern Meek or Talbot, but in mechanism of small pinion and larger cog-wheel, essentially what the latest reel is. Mr. Snyder was president of the Bourbon County Angling Club, and when not attending to his duties of presiding officer or engaged in his favorite occupation, angling, he applied himself to his trade, that of silversmith and

expert watchmaker. Naturally he first made a reel for his own use, improving upon the winch as he discovered need for improvement in actual fishing. So the multiplying reel is a fisherman's discovery, as is every piece of tackle which stands the test of time.

When Snyder's reel was all but perfect his friends were attracted by its value as an aid to sport, and we find the inventor holding the honorable position of reel-maker to the Bourbon County Angling Club. Some of Snyder's early reels are still in existence and disclose a loving care and intimate knowledge of tools worthy of emulation. Casting from the reel with artificial lures was undreamed of in those days, Snyder's reel being produced for live bait fishing only, though it was but a step from live bait casting to throwing artificial lures. In some respects, judged by modern standards, these early reels are crude, the plates being riveted in position, the drag and click cumbersome, the shaft projecting through the head and tail plate, the barrel much longer than those in use to-day. However, the multiplying reel had arrived.

Another man to turn his attention to reel making was Mr. J. F. Meek, who appeared in Frankfort, Ky., about 1833, improving the Snyder reel by operating the click and drag with sliding buttons, placing a collar around the crank shaft, and eliminating the protruding spool-shaft. In Louisville, Ky., in 1843, a man by the name of J. W. Hardman

began making reels for black-bass fishermen, and under his expert hand it may be asserted that the modern "Kentucky reel" took shape. Mr. Hardman shortened the spool, fastened the head and tail-plate to the pillars with screws instead of rivets, and increased the diameter of the spool, not to mention scroll work and ornamentation. Another name to be reckoned with in connection with the production of the wodern casting winch is that of Mr. Benjamin C. Milam, who in 1836 became an apprentice to Mr. J. F. Meek, soon taking charge of the reel making industry of the firm. Later on, in connection with his son, we find him making reels under his own name. There are other individuals who should be mentioned in connection with the early history of the multiplying reel, but in so brief a resumé it is out of the question. There is one outstanding fact, however, which even the careless reader will not fail to note, *i. e.,* the important place the Blue Grass country plays in the development of the casting reel; but this is as it should be, for it was from the south-eastern portion of the United States that the type-specimens of both species of black-bass were secured.

MECHANISM AND MATERIAL

The mechanism of the multiplying reel is very simple. The reel handle is not fixed directly to the spindle, as is the case with the single action, but connects with a cog-wheel geared upon a smaller

pinion at the end of the spool-shaft, so that one revolution of the crank produces two, three, four or six revolutions of the spool, depending upon the number of teeth in the wheels. The gearing is placed within the two plates forming the head of the reel, while the click and drag are usually attached to the inner surface of the tail-plate. That click and drag should be adjustable, goes without saying. It seems almost superfluous to make such a statement, yet I have seen anglers attempting to cast while the click screamed in agony, a sure way to ruin even the best reel. In playing a fish, slip on the click if you so desire, though personally I seldom use it even then. In trolling you will probably need both click and drag to prevent the reel from releasing line. The click consists of a bit of U-shaped watch spring engaging with a pinion on the rear spindle.

Various materials are used in the manufacture of reels,—nickel, hard rubber, German silver, aluminum, etc., though probably the best all 'round material is German silver. I make no mention of brass; by no means invest in a brass reel, whatever the price it will not be worth it. Nickel is good but not sufficiently durable, soon tarnishes and becomes unsightly. Hard rubber alone for head and tail plates is too fragile, in combination with German silver makes a beautiful winch, but requires careful handling. Aluminum, so far as I have experimented with it, is too soft, bends easily and mars in service.

More than once I have found an aluminum reel *hors de combat* when taken from its case, bent in transit. So we return to the statement made but a moment ago, the best all 'round material is undoubtedly German silver. All pinions, bearings, in fact, all working parts should be of finest tempered steel if the winch is to render lasting service.

Which brings us naturally to the matter of jeweled bearings. Undoubtedly well fitted jewels add to the life and free action of a reel, and is not, therefore, a mere fad as some seem to think. Personally I believe the lengthened service more than compensates for the added cost. Naturally the "jewels" should be evenly set and accurately ground or the spool will not run true and disaster result. When a jewel cracks, and I am told that they sometimes do, it must be immediately repaired or the reel will be speedily ruined. Fortunately ordinarily the jewels are set in screw-off oil caps and it is an easy matter to replace them. In this connection it is well to add that at least one reputable reel maker is producing winches without jewels, claiming that the phosphor-bronze bearings used by him are more durable and altogether as satisfactory. Undoubtedly phosphor-bronze bushings offer a smooth surface for the spool journals but I have yet to be convinced that the end-thrust should not be supported by jeweled spool-journals. If you can afford it, by all means purchase a sapphire mounted reel.

Anent this question of price, what was said regarding rod mountings in the former chapter should be repeated here. It is not the part of wisdom to add ornamentation to ornamentation just for the sake of producing an expensive reel. Utility and durability should always take first place. When one takes into consideration the amount of work performed by a reel in a single morning's casting he will understand why the very best of material must enter into its construction. It is not necessary that a reel should whirl forever and a day when the handle is started, indeed that very characteristic may be productive of back-lashes, and a source of untold anguish to the beginner. All that is required of a reel is that it should be well made, constructed of durable material, German silver and the best of finely tempered steel, with sufficient room between the plates for thumbing; to that end it is a good idea to select a reel with a somewhat large spool, winding the casting line upon a core of cheaper "filler," thus will the angler build up a broader resting place for his thumb, saving wear and tear upon that valuable member. I know of good reels that can be secured for three dollars and have some in my collection that cost more than ten times as much, but the three dollar reel, in the hands of a caster who understands the ways of bass and knows how to handle his outfit, will catch as many fish as the more expensive winch.

There are just two important operations in cast-

ing, so far as the reel is concerned, "thumbing" and "spooling." Naturally American inventiveness has sought to obviate the "human element" in both operations, making them purely mechanical; as a result we have the "self-thumbing" and "automatic-spooling" winches. However, making casting a simple mechanical operation is not wholly satisfactory. Well says Mr. Samuel G. Camp, in "Fishing Kits and Equipment": "It seems to me that there would not be much sport in using a self-aiming rifle or an auto-striking trout fly, and that there would be very little more enjoyment in using a self-thumbing reel."

It hardly seems necessary to assert that there is more true enjoyment in learning to handle a regular winch, one that must be thumbed properly and upon which the line must be laid with care, than can be derived from the use of a reel which does all the work automatically; however, it is not the part of wisdom to turn down every mechanical aid, nor taboo all who use them. The man who has time and patience to master the thumbing of a casting-reel will have little use for the self-thumber, though the man who goes fishing only once or twice a year, yet desires to cast "a la mode," will find such a winch a veritable godsend. But more regarding self-thumbers later on.

While for ordinary fishing I do not employ a self-thumber, I have one automatic-spooler which is a favorite winch, so I am not consistent in the matter

of mechanical aids. Aside from the "free-spools," reels in which by an ingenious arrangement the spool is freed from the handle at the will of the operator, we have many special reels, winches which well might be denominated "freak reels," of questionable value and seldom of lasting merit. Each season, almost, some inventor produces a new reel, something which he fondly believes is going to revolutionize casting and reel manufacture, but usually in a few months the invention is forgotten. Always I am, like all anglers, interested in these freaks, and enjoy trying them out, but I much doubt their permanent value. Personally I believe that the old tried and true type of reel is the best all around winch for the caster who wishes to become master of rod and lure.

ARISTOCRATIC REELS

Before I take up the discussion of special types I wish to pause for a moment to consider what I am pleased to term "aristocratic reels," such manifest blue bloods are they.

Some anglers seem to imagine that these high grade reels are produced to sell simply, that they are in nowise better tools than those selling at a much lower figure; in other words, it is the name upon the head-plate that makes the price. Once let a fair minded caster examine one of these high class reels, put it on his rod and cast a few times, and he

will never again make the assertion that it is the name only which adds to the cost of the reel. There is as much difference between the action of a well built, artistically finished quadruple multiplier, costing from $20.00 up to $50.00, and the $3.00 reel, say, as there is between a double-tapered fly-casting line and an unenameled "twisted fish line."

A friend of mine one day picked up one of my high-class reels—he is one of the fellows who has always considered a $6.00 winder good enough for any man no matter how rich—well, he spun the reel two or three times, held it up to his ear and listened to its even, rythmic purr, then turned it over and over in his hand. "Hum," he said, "had your name engraved on it, I see." Hesitated, looked at me embarassedly once or twice, awkwardly asked the loan of a casting-rod and disappeared in the direction of the back-yard. When he returned, he lay the beautiful thing down reverently and remarked concisely, "Darned if it ain't worth every cent it cost!" I am positive that any fair-minded rodster, after experimentation, would agree with the findings of my friend.

Having said all this is defense of the aristocratic winders, I must hasten to reiterate what I have said again and again in this work and in the outdoor press generally, it is the angler and not the winch that counts. In spite of the impression which I may leave to the contrary, getting men into the open, in touch

with the Spirit of the Out o'doors, is my aim, rather than merely to impart tackle knowledge.

There are reels costing $3.00, plain every-day winches, that I would not be ashamed to use in the presence of any angler, no matter how perfectly and expensively accoutered he might be. It is not necessary to pay an exorbitant price in order to get a good reel, but if you wish to secure the last word in reel construction and finish, you must expect to pay the careful workman for his time and skill. I do not consider a $3.00 reel a "cheap winch," simply, a "low-priced one." There is a nice distinction between cheap and low-priced. It is possible to secure a good nickel reel for $3.00, and German silver winches of worth and value in the neighborhood of $6.00.

Do not think for one moment that you are one whit more an angler because you can afford to put $30.00 or $50.00 into a reel, than though you were compelled by stern necessity to buy a sixty-cent department store winder. I will fish with you, if you will fish with me, no matter what your tackle, providing you play fair, give the bass a chance for his life, and are in rapport with Nature. While I love fine tackle, urge it upon all who can afford it, I desire that you always remember I am not "knocking" the low-priced articles.

Why should I disparage the medium and low-priced reels, pray? For every angler using a reel

costing $30.00, there are a hundred men casting with winches that cost much less. Even though you can afford it I would not advise you to buy an expensive winder before you have learned how to cast and how to care for a reel. Neither would I subject a fine reel to the hard service sometimes demanded of them in new country or upon a rough trip; do not take me as intimating that these "aristocratic winches" will not stand up under grief; they will, but they are too good to be so treated. That there is a logical place for the low-priced reels is admitted by all manufacturers of high grade tackle: witness the medium priced reels upon the market bearing such names as "Meek" and "Milam," names that we associate in our minds with only that which is best and most expensive. Always the angler progresses from the low-priced reel to the more expensive and perfect grades if he can afford to do so, if not he remains a user of the low-priced reel to the end of his angling days, satisfied and well content. My purpose is not to disturb his self-content, or make him envious. The more low-priced reels in use, the more men there will be evolving towards the better winches.

There is no joy quite equal to that of possession. Confucius was right: "The secret of life is in the possessive pronouns." To own a good reel, ah, that is the dream of every angler once he becomes enamoured with casting. It may be years before he

realizes his ambitions, but realize them he will if he be the right sort of a man. Somewhere I have said that a true angler will cut out cigars if necessary in order to secure a winch of quality. The average rodster spends enough foolishly each season to purchase a fine reel if he really desires one. Then, too, our grade of tackle measures our infatuation, and our understanding of the attractivity of angling. Have I not always said that it is the individual *soul,* if you please, that counts? Now I desire to say that there is no joy to which the angler is heir, more deep and lasting than the possession of good tackle. There is satisfaction in just handling the perfect reel, especially while the wild blizzards rage about the house, caressing the highly polished surface with a soft flannel cloth touched with oil, now and then striking the handle so that the whirling spool may sing its low siren song. The angler has never seen a reel spin until he has handled one made by an experienced workman with time to burn and not thinking of retail price. Elsewhere I have told of buying a reel for posterity, and it is not only possible but feasible, well worth the sober consideration of any lover of the gentle art. Think of placing an engraved reel in the hands of an angling son or daughter, with the admonition to care for it as you have cared for it, to treat it as you have treated it, and in the end hand it on to the rising generation. To will a winch, and

ARISTOCRATIC WINCHES

Upper "Meek."
Lower "Milam."

the high things good tackle stands for, is something more than a tackle lover's fad.

Lest you think that all the joy of good tackle is that of possession I have only to remind you that in casting tournaments it is the reels of worth and quality that carry off all the prizes. I have said that one should not subject a high grade reel to unnecessary hardship, but once you have seen the accurately ground winch in action you will appreciate what loving care and expert skill can do in the way of reel construction. In the hands of a tyro the ease with which some of the high-class winches spin would prove a serious drawback, he would be back-lashing all the time. But having learned how to handle a reel—that takes time, can not be accomplished over night—then use a winch bearing a name which stands for quality and the rodster will find a new zest in bass casting. Naturally I do not recommend any given winch; what particular reel to use is a matter for the individual angler to determine for himself. My only advise is, pay as much for this second winch as you possibly can afford, and the word of my experience for it, you will never regret the outlay. Call the expensive reel a luxury if you will —I am not altogether sure it is that—it will prove one of the most satisfactory investments of a lifetime.

Perhaps one of the best arguments for an expensive reel is that when a man pays $20.00 or more for

a winder he naturally takes better care of it than when he pays only $2.25. This *should* not be so, the cheap reel is deserving of as much care as the more expensive winch, will last enough longer to pay for the little time and attention expended. However, the man who abuses a cheap reel will never think of treating an expensive one with disrespect. All in all there are more arguments in favor of good winches than can be marshalled against them. So I urge my readers to invest—that is the word, "invest" in—do not buy simply—an aristocratic winch, as good as you can afford. Following my admonition, caring for the reel, some day you will thank me for the advice. Perhaps Henry John Doe, in the years to come, will write *my* descendants thanking *them* for these words.

Having said so much in favor of good tackle we are ready to continue the discussion of the various types of special reels, and will turn our attention to the free-spools first of all.

FREE-SPOOL REELS

In the foregoing pages I have barely mentioned the free-spools though they deserve a section to themselves. As was pointed out, the idea of the free-spool is simple in the extreme, the handle does not revolve in making a cast, so doing away with the menace of the balance handle, the "trouble maker." With the free-spool greater distance can be acquired

and back-lashes will be largely minimized. It is the inertia of the mechanism of a reel which retards the line at the beginning of the cast, and the momentum of the heavy handle, after it has been teased into action, that causes back-lashes. In ordinary reels almost one-half the caster's energy is expended in starting the spool which is burdened with the weight and inertia of the connecting handle; as a result the speed of the out-going line is retarded at first, and though the balance handle in motion acts as a sort of fly wheel, the line never regains the lost energy. In a word, the spool revolves faster than the lure can draw out line, and an over-run and back-lash results. Naturally one would suppose that to eliminate the balance handle would be to obviate two-thirds of the back-lashes, and perhaps it would if all else were equal.

When the angler accustomed to the ordinary reel attempts to cast with a free-spool he surprises himself with a back-lash at the very commencement of the cast, so easily does the spool spring into action, though of course that very fact prolongs the cast. Then, too, the free running spool reduces jar and vibration to the lowest possible degree, the reel is hardly "felt;" which is in itself provocative of back-lashes until the caster learns to handle the winch. I think I am safe in saying there are fewer good casters with the free-spool than with the old type of reel, that notwithstanding the fact that greater dis-

tance can be acquired with the latter winch. I am not altogether sure but that the free-spool requires greater skill upon the part of the angler.

When this type of reel first came to the fishing fraternity, the spool was thrown in and out of gear by means of a lever, push-button, or thumb-rest, and the angler was always forgetting to engage the handle when the fish struck; the result being that he cranked to beat the cars, while the fish continued to strip line from the reel. My first reel of the type had a little lever on the front bar which the thumb pressed unconsciously in thumbing. It was and is a good reel too, though an angler in the next county might think that an old fashioned horse-power threshing machine was in operation, judging from the noise. My second has a lever on the head which must be pushed forward to engage and back to free; as a result I am compelled to think of the reel rather than the fish when casting for bass. My third has an ingenious arrangement by which the spool is freed automatically in the beginning of the cast, and re-engaged by pressing in on the handle. All the caster has to do is to remember when he wishes to spool line is to press in upon the handle, but nine times out of ten he will forget that important matter. When I wish to enjoy a good laugh I loan that reel to a fishing companion; what the average caster will do—and say—when the bass are rising freely is passing belief. No sight is more mirth-provoking than to

watch the *other fellow* crank away for dear life while the bass of the day is stripping valuable line from the reel.

To-day, however, if you wish a free-spool you can secure one without a lever or push button of any sort. Absolutely automatic and dependable. When the rod is brought down in the first motion of the cast the spool is free, a single turn of the handle re-engaging it. It would seem that nothing further can be desired. The price is not prohibitive, $5.00 will secure a reel good enough for the average caster, and if you have more filthy lucre to spend, then $10.00 or $15.00 will add sapphires and ornamentation. About $30.00 will bring you the last word in free-spools, a reel beautiful enough and perfect enough to find a resting place in a display case, but a tool built for service.

No, to-day, if the caster desires a free-spool there is no reason under the sun why a good one should not find place in his tackle-box. Yet there seems to be something of a prejudice against this class of reels in the minds of practical anglers, one seldom sees them in actual use, and I am not recommending them to Tom, Dick, and Harry, though as to just why I am not, I am not altogether clear. Manifestly and confessedly, they are all the reel-makers claim.

When the line snarls upon the reel, even though it is *not* a back-lash—some will never confess to that

—unless the caster proceeds to untangle it with utmost care and caution, he may be compelled to take his reel to pieces in order to save the line. I once saw an exasperated caster go at a fine new line with his jack-knife, and what was left of that "Kingfisher" when he got through with it was not worth talking about.

The taking apart of a screwed reel is something to be undertaken only where the small screws cannot drop and be lost and the angler can not hear the rising fish splash. No real angler will fish with a dirty reel; should the winch fall into the sand it should be laid religiously aside until occasion offers an opportunity for a thorough cleaning. (See close of chapter for advise upon caring for the reel.) Realizing the importance and necessity for an easy-apart frame, a number of makers have produced take-down reels of merit. I think the Meisselbach's, of Newark, N. J., were pioneers in this field, their "Triparts" and "Take-a-parts," being the acme of simplicity and durability. The end bands screw off with a left hand thread, allowing the spool to fall out unhindered. I know of no better medium-priced reel upon the market. Both reels may be secured in the free-spool style, also at a slightly increased price. The Meeks, too, provide a take-apart frame, in which the tail-piece screws off with a left-hand thread. Like the Meisselbach reel, a tubular frame is employed. One need not say the Meek is a good

winch; the name is a sufficient guarantee. There are other take-downs upon the market, one I possess being separated by removing the oil caps at either end. When one can secure such quality reels as these at the modest outlay required there is no excuse for employing a "tin" winch or brass winder.

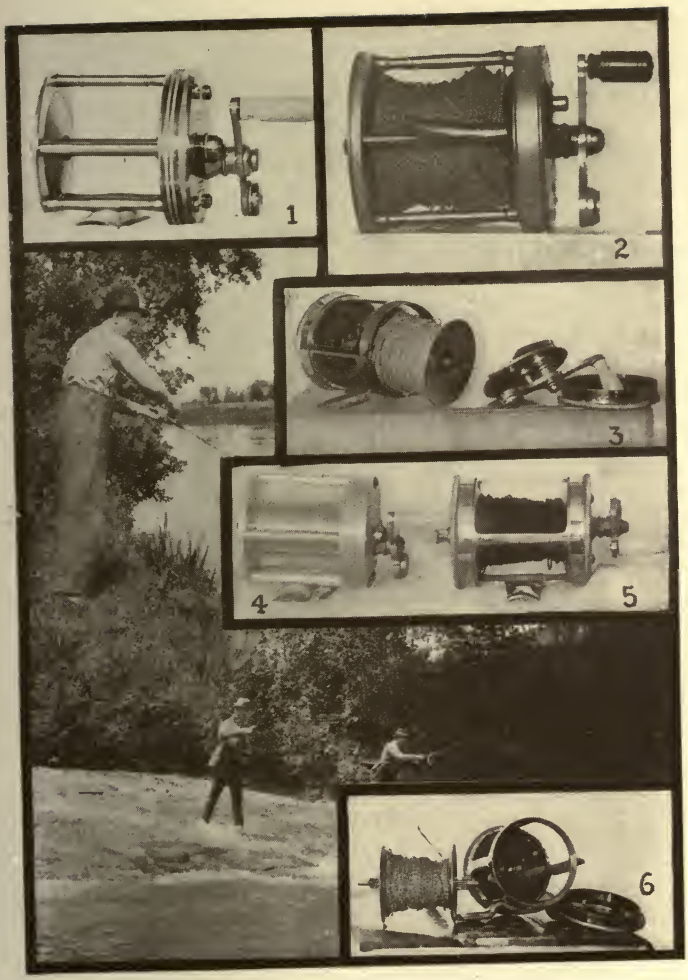
SELF-THUMBERS

Perhaps no class of reels have come in for more criticism and ridicule than the self-thumbers, in spite of which the sales have gone on increasing from year to year. As I have already remarked, for the man with ample time at his disposal, there is nothing quite so satisfactory as mastering the gentle art of reel-thumbing; you may not become proficient with the regular reel over night; weeks of practice is required. No man lives who does not upon occasion manufacture a back-lash, in comparison with which the famous Chinese puzzle is as a straight string.

The anti-back lash or self-thumbing reel does to a great extent eliminate backlashes. I have already said the automatic thumbers are for a class of anglers who have but little time to devote to casting and must become more or less proficient in the shortest possible time. With the automatic thumber the average man can, after an hour's practice, cast his 40 or 50 feet without backlashing as often as does the old hand with regular reel. Indeed, the careful man will all but eliminate back-lashes.

More and more night fishing for bass is coming into popular favor; here the self thumber is a manifest advantage, and when used in combination with the self-spooling devise, is the ideal winch. (See "The Self-spoolers.") That there is room for the self-thumber, even in the tackle-box of the old hand, we must concede. In spite of Mr. Camp's levitious remark regarding the "self-aiming rifle" and "auto-striking trout fly," anglers will go on buying and using reels that do everything but hook the fish. In the type of reel under discussion there are two deserving of mention, indeed I have used no others, these two seeming to combine all the excellent features required. We can devote but a brief paragraph to each reel, but will give the makers names and addresses, so if the reader is interested he can secure information direct.

One of the best and most favorably known is the so-called "Anti-Back-Lash Casting Reel," made by the South Bend Bait Co., South Bend, Ind. As will be readily discovered, the South Bend reel is a beautiful winch, following the symmetrical lines of the American quadruples; while devoid of ornamentation, this reel is possessed of a severe beauty peculiarly its own. The material is that best of all reel metals, German silver, highly polished. The spool and gear journals are of the best tool steel, running in phosphor-bronze bushings, while the end-



TAKE-A-PARTS—FOR THE MOST PART

1. Rediper, Self-Thumber.
2. Hunter, Free-spool. (One of the first free-spools.)
3. Take-a-part.
4. Rediper, Tournament.
5. Meek, Easy-a-part.
6. Tripart.

thrust is supported by jeweled end-caps of special pattern.

However, it is as a self-thumber that we are particularly interested in the winch. Let me quote from one of the firm's trade circulars: "It is just like any other finely made reel, being the product of the highest efficiency in the mechanical jeweler's art. The tiny, almost unnoticeable stiffened wire which thumbs the reel automatically is contained within the reel. This hidden mechanism is itself controlled by a knurled adjusting screw-cap. The breaking effect is adjustable in a moment, entirely without the use of tools, to suit any weight of bait."

The thumbing devise is the acme of simplicity. In assembling the tackle for fishing, the reel is threaded as per accompanying instructions, the line passed out through the guides, lure attached, and tension-screw adjusted so that a jar will tease line from the spool. It will readily be seen that different sized lures can be employed with equal facility, all that is required is to adjust the tension-screw to different weights. At the beginning of the cast, the wire bail under which the line passes, is lifted, thus relieving the pressure of the "human wire," as some one has called it, upon the head of the spool, the thumber. As the lure slows up, the wire bail falls, exerting the requisite pressure upon the spool; not too much, so that the spool is stopped, not too little so that an over-run results. A great respect will

be born in the caster for that little wire; it thumbs the reel as perfectly as could a past-master of the art. I personally have tried out this reel under all conditions of casting and have never found it wanting.

We now turn to a winch known to all bass enthusiasts, the pioneer in the field, I believe. The "Redifor Self-thumbing Reel," is just what its name implies, a self-thumber. A history of the development of this reel would not fail to interest anglers, if we could spare the space to give it, beginning as it does with the story of the free-spool lost overboard something like thirty years ago, until the day when Flegel's centrifugal thumbers were added and the reel came to be the perfect winch it is to-day.

This Flegel thumber is simple in the extreme, the word "centrifugal" explaining adequately. A pair of little flanges are attached to the outer surface of the rear end of the spool, covered by the end-plates, so invisible. The centrifugal force of the spinning spool throws these flanges out against the rim of the end-plate, governing the action of the spool absolutely and automatically. There you have it, so simple that anyone might have thought it out, but so simple that no one did. Aside from the flanges, the reel is built on the lines of ordinary quadruples. When one says that this is a beautiful, serviceable and durable winch, he has by no means said it all, for even superlatives would not be extrav-

agant. My best advice to anglers is, if you desire to eliminate thumbing, investigate these two reels.

In concluding, let me say, that the modern Redifer reel is made in combination with the Enterprise Mfg. Co., Akron, Ohio, as the name on the head-plate would indicate—"Pflueger-Redifor," and can, I believe, be secured from either firm. The fact of the matter is, the genius of both firms enter into the construction of the reel; but if you desire a free-spool Redifor, you must correspond with the Ohio firm.

But what about the "no sportsman" allegation sometimes hurled against those rodsters who use the auto style of reel? To a certain type of mind any innovation is unsportsmanlike. We all remember when the first pump shot guns were produced what a cry was raised against them, no "true sportsman" would be guilty of employing such a weapon in duck shooting; again, when the automatic was brought out, the same note sounded. Now, we admit that a gunner may employ a pump gun or automatic if he choose and violate no ethics of sport. Because an individual of porcine proclivities, employing a certain instrument can gratify the demands of his base nature, is no reason why a true sportsman could not use the same instrument rightly.

Personally I can not understand why one should object to the newer reels upon the ground of sportsmanship. What if they do do all the work? If a man does not want to spend the time necessary to be-

come adept with the regular reel, in all conscience let him use the self-thumber, self-anything, if he so desires. The day is far past surely, when tackle makes a sportsman; true sportsmanship is an infinitely finer thing than a mere matter of paraphernalia; it is the controlling spirit of the man. While, to me, there is more enjoyment in accurately gauging the speed of my reel with a thumb grown sensitive from many seasons of service, it is not for me to cry down the fellow who finds the self-thumber an aid to pleasure. I use the self-thumbing reel upon occasion, and am not ashamed of it, while a well-known self-spooler is amid my favorite winches. If you desire to "start something," just intimate that I am "no sportsman."

We have dealt with free-spools, of which there are several makes upon the market, we have spent some time with the self-thumbers, describing at length the two best known winches of the type, now we turn our attention to the self-spoolers, those reels provided with an ingenious contrivance for distributing the line evenly upon the spool.

I have already told you why the reel back-lashes, indeed I have enumerated several "whys" but still remains the great cause. Unless the line be properly spooled while retrieving the lure, a back-lash is bound to result at the next cast, mere thumbing will not prevent it. In all my writing upon casting I have emphasized the importance of spooling the line prop-

erly, experience having taught me that unless it be done, no amount of casting ability or thumbing skill will prevent a back-lash. If you wish a demonstration, simply allow the line to pile up at one point, do not distribute it with the guiding thumb and forefinger of the left hand, until it topples over and the loops are wound over by the incoming line. You have all the "makings" of a back-lash. Cast, and discover for yourself. While experience soon teaches a man that he must pay minutest attention to spooling the line while playing a fish, the beginner forgets to do so in the excitement of the battle, and at times the oldest hand errs, a slip for which tyro and experienced caster must pay in bitterest experiences.

I have already referred to the growing popularity of night fishing and the advisability of using an automatic thumber therefor, but as between the automatic thumber and self-spooler alone, I would say without hesitation, select the latter; but when you can select a reel with both features in combination, for that particular sport, you are foolish not to do so. As I have said several times already, I enjoy thumbing the reel, and in regular daylight fishing will not employ a mechanical device which robs me of that pleasure; but the matter of spooling the line is, as the German said, "A horse of some more color;" when the spooling attachment does not interfere to any great extent with the cast—distance

and control—I gladly employ it. In a word, my favorite all-around casting-reel is an automatic-spooler. With such a reel the angler is free to give all his attention to the cast, and when the fish is hooked, to the battle, assured the reel is taking care of the line as he could not "by hand."

The first spooling devises which attracted my attention were attachments, built to fit any reel of given dimensions; naturally they were more or less crude and awkward, one, which I am under the impression was never put on the market, was propelled by a tiny belt running in a groved pulley attached to the spool at one end; if the belt stayed in position, if half a dozen things did not happen, the reel worked, but unfortunately things usually happened. We can not take time to mention the various crude productions though each was something of an advance upon its predecessor. Came at last the Redifor spooler or winder, which would fit any reel with round pillars of a given length. The line played out over a little pulley, which was thrown down in casting so as to be out of the way, and up against the line in retrieving, playing back and forth upon an endless screw. It will be readily understood that the line caused the pulley to revolve and so travel upon the endless screw, and when the pulley was not pressed up against the line with the caster's right hand fore-finger the winder did not work. Some-

thing for the caster again to remember when he desires to think only of the bass.

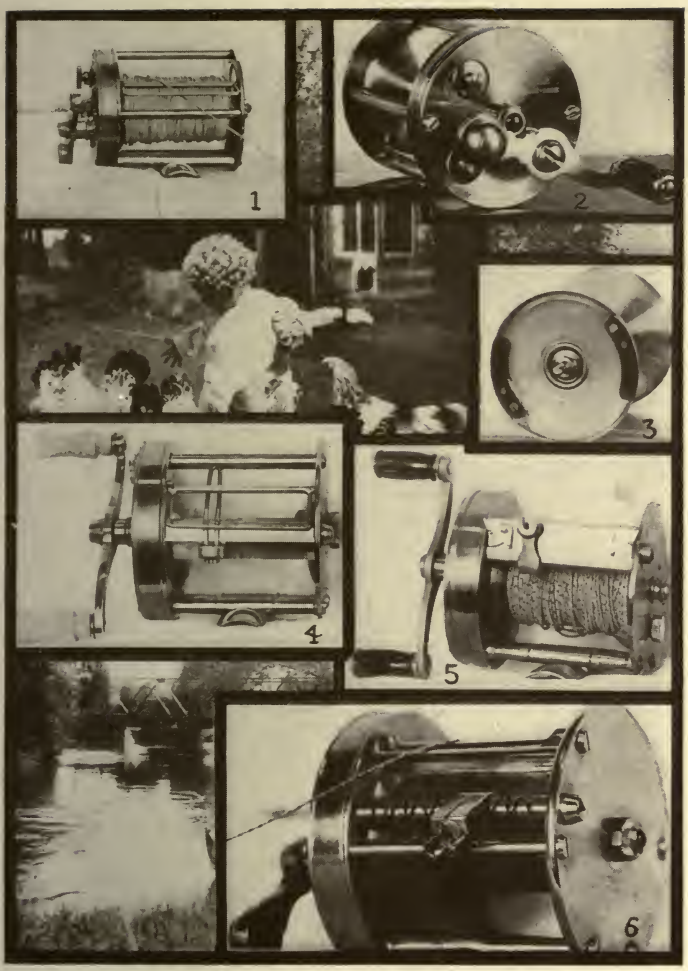
I tried out several attachments all of which worked more or less successfully to a greater or less degree, but none were satisfactory to me; they were attachments. There is a vast difference between an attachment and a level winding devise built in, a component part of the reel.

It is hardly necessary to give a history of the Shakespeare level-winder and of the Marhoff invention, similar, save that the former employs a double propelling screw, while the latter uses but one. It is a built-in devise, all mechanism being encased in the head of the reel. A pinion at the rear of the driving gear meshes with the line-carriage screw-pinion which drives the line-guide back and forth along the endless screw. This line-guide must travel whenever the reel handle is turned; there is no disconnecting or throwing it out of gear. It would seem that the double propeller would be the stronger reel, but the single has greater line capacity in the same size. On the inner side of the line-carriage pawl, is the carriage-pin, playing in the endless screw. Really, it is all very simple.

To the complaint sometimes made that there is too much "trigging" about the level winder, I would say that I have used them for a number of years and only once has a reel gotten out of order, then it was bent in transportation, the "baggage-smasher's"

fault. The caster will be surprised at the ease with which the level-winder works, indeed, seems to interfere little with distance, and, after practice, increases casting accuracy. Probably I should qualify that statement regarding distance: the rodster will not be able to cast as far as with the regular reel, not nearly as far as with the free-spool, but he can cast as far as actual fishing necessitates, and with utmost ease. I am often asked regarding the level-winder's durability and can only say that I have used a single reel for a goodly portion of my casting during the last five years and it apparently is in as perfect condition to-day as upon the day I received it from the Express Company; however, bear in mind that I have cared for the winch, therein is the secret of durability always. The list prices of these level-winders run from $7.50 up to $35.00.

The Redifor people have recently placed a level-winder upon the market which seems in a class by itslf. It not only lays the line but is also a self-thumber and free-spool. The line is free of the guide in casting but is automatically picked up the instant the rodster begins to reel. The advantage of this feature is that friction is saved, adding to the caster's distance. The free-spool feature is under the rodster's control, the handle governing. It is a great reel for the man who desires the automatic features. Well made, of course, for it comes from the the Redifor shops, a sufficient guarantee. Many



"THUMBERS" AND SELF-SPOOLERS

1. South Bend, "Anti-Backlash."
2. Redifor, "Self-Thumber."
3. Redifor, "Governor."
4. South Bend, "Level Winder."
5. Pflueger, "Supreme."
6. Redifor, "Beetzsel."

anglers who have used it, write me that is the last word in reel construction. A well-known bass-fan said, in a personal letter to me: "The Beetzsel" is the best casting reel in America to-day," and he is an angler who has used many reels. "Beetzsel" is its name and $20.00 its price. Made by Redifor Rod and Reel Co., Warren, Ohio.

The very latest reel to appear, the Pflueger-Supreme, made by the Enterprise Mfg. Co., Akron, Ohio, sells at $20.00, and is the last word in self-thumbing, self-spooling, free-spool winches. The line guide gear is enclosed in a box which drops down out of the way the instant the cast is made, but springs up and engages the line as soon as the handle is touched. Little "dogs" at either end of the spooler-box chase the line into the guide as soon as touched. The action is very positive and quick. No danger of the line "piling" when using this reel. The free-spool feature is automatic, a slight movement of the handle being sufficient to re-engage. One feature of the reel which will undoubtedly appeal to many casters is the "switch-on" self-thumber. If you do not care to use the self-thumbing device simply set the arrow on the milled button at "off" and the reel is a regular winch to be thumbed by the operator. While this is the newest member of the auto reel family one can well believe that it is going to prove popular. Well made of German silver, it certainly is a handsome winder.

There has just appeared upon the market a new reel of this type—self-thumber, self-winder, but not free-spool. I refer to the South Bend Level Winding Anti-Backlash Casting Reel. In the section devoted to self-thumbers, I discussed the South Bend reel, the one with a "human wire," therefore I do not need to go into that matter here. Recently the South Bend people have entered into an arrangement with the Shakespeare Company by which the latter's well-known and thoroughly dependable self-spooling device has been added to the Anti-Back-lash action, the result being a splendid winch for the bait-caster or muskellunge troller. This latest reel is strongly and most beautifully made, with double handle and fine jewels. The lover of the original Anti-Back-Lash will be delighted to get his favorite reel with the added help of the level-winder, which as I have pointed out, is one of the greatest aids to casting skill and accuracy. Naturally the reel must needs be moderately high priced—$25.00—but what angler will balk at that when he takes into consideration the many advantages of the new reel? Probably this reel will be on the market about the time this book appears from the press and I am sure that it will render most excellent service—both the reel and the book—and anglers will welcome the latest member of a large and growing family.

FREAK WINCHES

I have already referred to what I may term "freak reels," a great many of which were still-born or lived a short life though there is still any number upon the market. After all, the angling fraternity is somewhat conservative; it will not stand for a too radical innovation. A change must come gradually if it is to be adopted. There may be good points about a freak reel, but because it is a freak it will stand little show of even a fair try-out. I, Philistine though I am, do not care for a reel *too* different. Naturally in writing of these odd reels from my collection I will refrain from commenting upon their merits and demerits to any great extent, leaving the reader to determine in his own mind their respective value.

The "Gyratory Reel" was brought to my home by a traveling representative of a certain hardware house, a "special" he was then pushing. We tried it out on the street to the great amusement of a crowd that soon gathered and they were not all fishermen either. The name—"Gyratory"—gives a very good idea of the winch, referring to the eccentric action of the spool,wobbling from left to right like a lodge goat, with each revolution, laying the line from end to end of the spool. A lever frees the spool from the crank-shaft so that it is a "free-spool." It will be noticed that it is built in the handle of the rod, is a part of the rod. The crank

is of peculiar shape. All in all, I consider it one of the strangest creations ever produced for winding a line or casting. However, it certainly will handle a line in a manner to surprise the doubting Thomases, but a man would need to be possessed of more than a little courage to take the arrangement out in company on a bass-lake. Yet it may become popular.

Another odd bass reel which came into my possession a few years ago, was the "Kenward Special," though there is nothing radically strange about it save the arrangement for thumbing. It is somewhat like the well-known single actions—"Experts"—which are so popular with trout-fly-fishermen, only much larger, being something like seven inches in diameter, a single revolution of the spool retrieving nearly two feet of line. The handle is simply two knobs fastened directly to the reel-head. At the base of the reel is a concave surface provided for the thumb, the idea being to facilitate thumbing. Though I tried out the reel somewhat at length I never succeeded in getting the hang of it, the side weight tipping the rod over in spite of my best efforts. I have always been sorry that I let those two reels get out of my collection and would be very glad indeed to replace them.

One sometimes sees listed, I never happened to see them in actual use, reels built in the rod handle. The innovation seems too great for the average fisherman; though one can easily discover certain

advantages that such an arrangement would have, it would also have several disadvantages. The spooling of the line properly might be something of a problem, while, if not of the take-down style, a backlash would be quite difficult of solution; upon the other hand, the weight of the reel is in the center and the rod will not turn in the hand. (Parenthetically, I have often thought that without the off-set handle, same attached directly to the reel plate as in single action reels, one would have a perfect winch for trout bait fishing along brushy creeks, nothing to catch in the brush, one could even drag the rod after him without fear of entanglement.)

Some two years ago I received a sample "Thumezy" reel, a surprising bit of machinery. Made of German silver, put together in a workmanlike manner, it is a reel apparently built for a lifetime. The inventive genius who produced the "Thumezy" must have sat up nights thinking out the various things his winch will accomplish. Just to enumerate: the metal thumb-stall thumbs the spool, the thumb is not worn by contact with the line, and by pressing down to the lowest possible point, the spool is automatically freed from the winding gear, becomes free, so for casting it is a free-spool; to wind in, the operator but presses in on the handle which instantly connects the spool with the gear; slide on the click on the rear plate and advance the thumb-stall notch by notch—6 of

them—the tension is increased with each, at the seventh the click is thrown off, the spool becomes free once more; remove the two thumb-screws at either end, which takes the place of oil-caps, and the reel falls apart. I do not know that I have enumerated all the special features possessed by this winch, but surely I have mentioned enough to convince you that the "Thumezy" is "different" alright; however, it should not be called a "freak" for it is a practical reel.

The "Stockford" is not a radical innovation and in nowise a freak though it appears odd. The gear is enclosed in a small gear-box attached to the outside of the head-plate, small, inconspicuous and light. The striking original feature is the lack of pillars; the ordinary reel has three above the reel-plate, the "Stockford" has but one, and that low down in the rear. The spool being open, in case of even a superlatively bad back-lash, it would not be necessary to take the reel apart, the operator can get at the line with ease. Do not imagine that because of few pillars the frame is weak and wobbly; it is unusually firm and rigid. By the way, the open frame and gear box is used to some extent by other makers; the former is a great convenience, while the latter reduces the weight of the reel.

To continue discussing the various patterns which from time to time have come from original makers, would be a pleasure, but we have mentioned a suf-

ficient number to prove that there is a reel for the lover of the unusual, and wide awake inventors are racking if not wrecking their brains to produce something different. Any day, perhaps, some angling, tool-wise Walton will invent a casting reel that will revolutionize the sport, who knows? However, I am free to admit that I am a conservative of the conservatives. I do not ask my reel to do all the work. I desire to do the major part of it myself. I prefer the simple un-everything reel. Just the same, there is no greater treat in store for the lover of bass tackle than to stand before a well filled reel cabinet, displaying the various orthodox and heterodox winches that have been produced; undoubtedly many of them spell tragedy for some inventor.

ATTACHMENTS

Various attachments have been produced, of more or less merit, two or three of which should be mentioned in this connection because of not a little value to the bait caster. The angler who has trouble with hand-cramp will find the finger-hook and hand-grasp attachment a veritable boon, for it will obviate his trouble to a great extent; furthermore, it clamps the reel firmly upon the rod; and is a splendid finger-hook; but it is as a hand-grasp that it will appeal most strongly. Made of German silver, satin finished, it does not detract from the appearance of the rod.

Various "handle drags" or "brakes" have been placed upon the market, easily among the best being the Meisselbach people's "Governor." Produced originally in large size for salt water reels, its utility in heavy bass and muskellunge fishing was speedily realized, and it was built for regular casting reels. It is made of German silver with hard rubber handle, 2 7-16 inches long, its presence on the reel in place of the regular handle hardly being noticeable. It is essentially a crank, but made in three parts, fitted to slip or revolve upon one another, and clamped together by adjusting screws which produce the required tension. The angler simply adjusts the screws so that the drag will release the line before the breaking point is reached; all he does then is to hold the handle, secure in the fact that his capture can not injure his tackle. I have found it of great value in trolling. As was intimated above, the regular handle is removed, the "Governor" taking its place as a crank. In ordering, care should be taken to give the size of the stem correctly, or the drag will not work. Other drags of the sort examined by me are very similar, so I let this represent the class.

It will be noticed that some reels now-a-days have double crank handles attached, and I deem the attachment or improved handle of sufficient importance to give it special mention here. At first thought the angler might suppose it would be ungainly or awkward, and it does so impress the

average caster when first attached, but after an hour's work he finds himself depending upon the "ever present handle." While the stock argument used in favor of the device is that the absolutely equal air resistance and centrifugal tension of the two arms gives great smoothness when the reel is in action, I have found the double handle easier to grasp. My first one came with a new reel, though I had ordered the regular single handle—perhaps the maker took the "under-handed" method of getting me to try the thing—disgusted, I was on the point of returning the reel to the maker, when my bump of angling curiosity got in its work and I tried the winch out, just as the maker knew I would. (Is there a more pregnant word in the angler's vocabulary than the verb to try-out!) By the way, that original double handle is still attached to the reel with which it came.

So we have traced the evolution of the casting reel from the first Kentucky double multiplier down to the modern highly specialized winch that can do everything but "spit on the bait." Surely the angler would be foolish indeed who would try to use them all, and would have to command a considerable bank account. My collection is in nowise complete, but it represents several hundred dollars, and had it not been for the thoughtfulness and consideration of various makers it would have been in nowise as complete as it is. After all, when it comes to actual fishing, a

$3.00 reel will bring as many doughty bass to net as will a $60.00 artistic winch. The joy of fine tackle is largely the joy of possession. I own one or two reels, purchased by me at considerable sacrifice, worth—well, never mind how much, which I expect to will to my angling daughter when I die, having no son. I can see no reason why those fine winches may not be handed on down from generation to generation of tackle lovers, and right there lies the secret of durable tackle, loving it. I offer my experience and knowledge of tackle to the readers of these pages. I shall be glad to advise with you as to what particular reel to choose, but do not for a single moment think that your enjoyment and success on lake or stream will depend wholly upon the reel selected; remember, in the final analysis, it is *you* that counts.

In concluding this chapter, a few words of advice regarding the care of the reel may not be out of place.

CARE OF THE REEL

It may seem to the reader that already we have said too much regarding the proper treatment of the reel, but when you stop to consider that the modern high grade casting winch is as finely constructed as an ordinary watch, adjusted ofttimes to the minutest fraction of an inch, you will appreciate why it is necessary to treat the reel with intelligent care. When you put $25.00 into a watch, you do not throw

it into a tin box to let it rattle about like a single loose pea in a large pod, neither do you drop it into a sand-bank and expect it to keep time thereafter without a thorough over-hauling.

You have no right to treat your reel with any less consideration and respect than you lavish upon your favorite time-piece. Every caster should own two reels at least, of as good grade as he can afford, perhaps one better than the other, so that it will never be necessary to subject the high class reel to the rough work sometimes inflicted upon them. Suppose your reel is not securely fastened to your rod and falls into the water—I have known it to happen—down, down it goes until it rests on sand and mud at the bottom; now you must pull all the line from the spool before you can raise the reel to the surface, obviously that reel should not be used again until it has undergone a thorough cleaning. A single grain of sand in the bearings will ruin a good winch in a short time.

Just to illustrate the point: Near the close of the bass season a friend and I paid a farewell visit to a justly famous lake. I supplied the tackle from my cabinet. I desired that my friend use a really high class winch for he inclines to the ancient long pole and fixed line, so I all unwittingly carefully packed one of my best reels in its chamois bag and sole-leather case. Well, at the lake, I assembled the tackle, adjusted the reel, and handed the outfit over

with not a little pride. We went down to the boat and, *he laid his rod down in the loose sand* instead of setting it up on laying it upon a log conveniently near. I promptly picked it up, mentally praying that no sand had entered the gearing; had it been one of my self-winders I do not know what I would have done, for I did not want to offend him. In the boat it was just the same, he handled that cherished winch as though it was an object of little worth, while in truth it cost considerably more than the watch he was carrying. The matter came to a climax when he manufactured a back-lash, calmly removed the reel from the rod, placed it on the dirty boat floor, and actually *kicked it over to me.* I nearly died of heart failure. I forthwith suggested that he do the rowing and I the casting, a suggestion which met with his approval because "the fish were not biting anyway."

Such an incident as the foregoing to a lover of rods and reels seems an utter impossibility, but alas, it is far too common. I have loaned tackle. However it may serve as a text for a little exhortation upon the necessity for high-grade tackle. Once the rodster possesses a classy winch, for which he lavishes $20.00 or more, he will never treat any reel with disrespect. Consistently I have urged good tackle for twenty years, knowing from my own experience that nothing will react more salutarily upon the angler. Ofttimes friends near and far have

taken issue with me, not understanding my viewpoint and object.

As always, I grant that a sportsman will be a sportsman, a gentleman a gentleman, irrespective of the tools used. Let that stand as an axiom. However, if the angler can by any means afford it, let him possess a reel bearing the name of a firm that stands for quality first. Cut out the pipe and cigars if need be and purchase a good winch; you will never regret it. Have your name engraved upon the headplate, so that you can hand it down to your son—or your daughter, for, please God, we are going to raise a breed of women to whom the kiss of the sun will be more welcome than that of the flatterer—and care for it with all the loving affection of which you are capable. My word for it, it will never fail you. What was that? "What reel shall I purchase?" I can not say, but write me any time, stating your needs and I will gladly drop any task to advise you.

Undoubtedly I shall be accused of repeating in this chapter just what I have been saying from the beginning and in the outdoor press for the last ten years, but that fact shall not deter me if by so doing I may reach and influence some angler to treat his winches with greater respect. Perhaps some reader will think that my assertion—"More depends upon care bestowed than upon the make"—an exaggeration, but I insist that it is demonstrable fact. I still

have in my possession the first reel ever purchased by me, a cheap, department-store contraption, and yet that reel could be used for angling to-day. The secret of its durability is not to be found in its manufacture, the few cents I payed for it would disillusion any one on that score, but in the loving care bestowed upon it by its boy-owner. I have no interest in any particular reel, though of course I have my favorites. I am urging you to care for your reel simply that you may get the maximum amount of service out of it. Yet my advice is—buy a good reel, yes, an expensive reel, so that you will be ashamed *not* to care for it.

At first thought almost anyone knows enough to take a reel to pieces without a word of advice, but simply taking apart is not all there is to cleaning a reel by any means. Never take down a reel simply to "see how it is made." It does not pay to up-set just for the sake of up-setting. The first step is to secure a screw-driver that accurately fits the screw-slots on the head of the reel. The handle of the screw-driver should not be so small as to render little purchase, nor yet should it be so large as to broom the screws by giving too much purchase. Be careful, for nothing is more unsightly than a reel with screw-heads battered out of shape. Take out the screw that holds the handle in position and remove the latter, then take out the screws—three or four—which hold the cap in place. If your reel is provided with a drag, it should be slipped on before the cap is

removed. If cap does not come off easily, tap gently with handle of screw-driver, if of wood, and thus loosen. The next step is to remove the front plate, which is exposed by removal of cap. You have now but to remove the spool and your reel lies before you ready for cleaning. If you have worked carefully you have in nowise marred your winch.

Get a brush with some fine bristles, a tooth brush will do, to clean gears. Clean every part of the reel with benzine or alcohol; I prefer the former as it "cuts" the dirt better. With a bit of soft cotton cloth or chamois skin, remove all oil, dirt and grit from the plates, cap, wheel, spool and stud. Sharpen a lead pencil, or bit of hard wood, and wrap with cotton cloth and insert in pivot-holes and holes in gears. Wipe until there is no sign of dirt on the cleaner. Perhaps it will seem to the reader that I am unnecessarily particular, but it is just this minute care that causes a reel to last indefinitely. The cleaning finished, put a small drop of oil in each pivot-hole, a drop on the stud—the post upon which the gear fits—two drops of oil or a little vaseline in the gear-teeth. *Do not over-lubricate.* You must exercise considerable care with the vaseline especially or you will apply too much and your reel will run sluggishly. Use only the best oil. Some reel makers supply an oil compounded especially for reels. I have found the so-called "One Drop" oiler very convenient, as with it the single drop can be

placed just where you want it; lacking some such container, use a tooth-pick. Having oiled, assemble carefully, taking pains not to screw more tightly than before, so springing the cap, though sufficient tension must be secured to hold the cap firmly in place.

How often should a reel be cleaned and oiled? All depends upon the use and abuse to which subjected. Properly handled, a bait reel should not require cleaning more often than once a month, though if it fall in the dirt, it should not be used without a thorough overgoing. Of course, a reel in active use should be oiled frequently; that need not be said. After a hard day's casting it is my practice to take the reel apart and give it a careful cleaning; it pays in service I think, and it must be confessed that I enjoy "puttering" with my "rods and reels and traces." However, a reel should never be taken apart unless absolutely necessary, and never assembled in haste. A careless or hurried hand will work irreparable injury. Nothing is more unsightly than a viciously marred end-plate, or battered screw-heads; both are easy of accomplishment, too, as more than one angler can testify. Perhaps I should add here that if the reel has been immersed—and some anglers think little of shoving rod and reel beneath the surface—a foolish and noxious habit, it should not be used again before drying. Quite recently an angler brought me a reel for examination, complaining that it "lugged and

kicked-back" in action. Upon taking the winch apart, it was a reel of quality, too, I found that it had been left full of water and the condition of the gears can better be imagined than described. If "a stitch in time saves nine," what of the man who never does any sewing?

While I have gone into this matter of caring for the reel somewhat in length, it may be that I have left unsaid something which I should have said, though I doubt very much if I *have said too much.* Get a good reel by all means, and care for it as the very apple of your eye and the word of my experience for it, it will render long and lasting service. Any reel from the shop of a reputable maker should last a life-time, or longer; will if you do your part. Do not imagine that the makers, whose named stand for quality, manufacture reels just to sell; they build them to last, knowing that a satisfied customer is the very best kind of an advertisement. Be good to your tackle.

CHAPTER III

TERMINAL TACKLE

The amateur can usually secure information concerning rods, reels and artificial lures; indeed, I sometimes think there is such a wealth of information that it is almost confusing; but regarding the subject of this chapter there seems to be a paucity of advice, and a few words may not be out of place. After all, the rod and reel are not of greater importance than the line; if the latter hold, the fish may be netted in spite of shattered rod and balking reel; transversely, if the line break, it matters not how perfect the reel and strong the rod. So, while I have captioned this chapter "Terminal Tackle," most of the space at my disposal will be devoted to the line, for the matter of lures will be discussed in the following chapter. Then, too, there are certain articles of minor importance, though their possession adds greatly to the angler's enjoyment, which I will briefly discuss here. Therefore, this is to be a talk upon a number of things seldom touched upon in a book of this kind.

The question of line-material may be dismissed with but a word, silk alone being worthy of the

caster's attention. All other materials experimented with by me have proven too harsh for the thumb, that valuable member being worn to the very "quick" in a few hours casting when the line has been at all rough or hard; indeed, with the softest of silk lines on my reel I have more than once been compelled to forego angling because my thumb would not endure the wear of the spinning spool. It goes without saying that the rodster's line should be braided and not twisted, for the twisted thread will kink and snarl in a manner undreamed of by the braided, though the latter can kink upon occasion as every caster has discovered to his sorrow. The wise angler will choose the so-called "soft braided" line because it is less severe upon the thumb than the "hard braided," then, too, the former spools more evenly and closely than the latter, a very decided advantage. The line should be without waterproofing, or any sort of dressing whatever; you may set that down as an axiom, though an ambitious maker once sent me a special waterproof line, built with the caster's requirements in mind, which was a wonder, but hard upon the thumb after all. After many years of experience and experiments I have come to the conclusion the undressed, soft braided line is the only thing for the bass-caster.

Naturally, the caster is at the mercy of the dealer, for no matter how well a line may be made, if the retailer has held it in open stock for a year or two,

subject to atmospheric changes, it can not be in first class condition. Lines deteriorate even if not used. Some makers send out their lines in air tight glass tubes, asserting that when sealed they do not age so quickly. I can not speak with certainty, however, for two seasons I carried two lines in my tackle box, one wound upon a spool, the other in a sealed tube; though of the same grade, and from the same maker, the air-exposed line proved 50 per cent. weaker than the one kept in the glass tube. Perhaps the experiment proves nothing but I am storing my spare lines these days in air tight receptacles, test-tubes sealed with electrician's tape.

It might be well to add that it is never the part of economy to purchase a cheap line; the best is in the end cheapest. Always purchase a line bearing the name of a maker known to the angling world. Let the book-writers and angling editors do the experimenting; so save your money and your fish. A good line of 50 yards, a practical fishing length, should cost you slightly over $1.00; I would not think of buying a lower priced one, lest the maker had been compelled to shade the quality in order to make the price.

The matter of size is much misunderstood by many anglers, at least so it seems, for one sometimes sees lines of tremendous size wound upon casting reels. There are just two sizes worth consideration by the bass-fishermen—G and H. G, where you may

hook an unusually heavy fish, like the southern bass or northern pike; H, for all ordinary bass fishing; indeed, with the latter size a skillful angler may land almost any fish. G should test in the neighborhood of 20 pounds, and H about 16. As sizes vary and some makers use numbers instead of letters, ordinarily it is a good idea to mention strength required when ordering. Most makers issue a sample card, showing colors, sizes and strength. Before you order, after you have determined what particular make you desire, send for a card of samples. Do not wait until the night before you start on your trip, then rush down to the tackle store and purchase "any old thing" the dealer happens to have in stock; your portion will be that of the man who marries in haste. Get a good line.

I honestly do not believe the question of color a matter of great importance in bass-casting; the fish does not wait to look at the line, once the lure comes crashing down upon the water. In bait-fishing, I mean still-fishing with live bait, I desire a line as near the color of the water as it is possible for a man to secure; there I have found that a conspicuous line has a tendency to frighten feeding fish. In bait-casting it is the splash of the lure which attracts the fish, the lure speeds away at the end of the line, therefore the fish has little opportunity to be frightened by it. My experiments have convinced me that size is a more important matter than color.

Of course the line should be of some harmonizing tint, in dark water a dark line, in clear water a light line. I have fished lakes where the water possessed a peculiar green tint or sheen; there I would use a green and white line. In some waters a brown line is almost invisible. For a "general purpose" line, perhaps there is nothing better than "salt and pepper," black and white mottled. But as I said at the beginning of this paragraph, color is not a matter of determining importance, and much overrated by some anglers. The well equipped tackle-box should contain two "salt and pepper," one green and white, and one brown or black; so furnished, the bass-caster may go up against any unknown water proposition without fear or hesitancy.

Care of the line is a matter of greater moment than color or size. The angler who does not painstakingly care for his line has no business complaining when the record fish of the day breaks loose and escapes, neither should he set up a howl that the dealer has cheated him. The better the line the more care it deserves. The line must be thoroughly dried once a day; to do so does not require an expensive drying reel though that is a great convenience. Just stretch between two trees, preferably in the shade, it will take but a few moments to dry thoroughly on an ordinary summer day. If in the house, it can be stretched between two nails, wound about the backs of two chairs, or even heaped in

loose coils on the floor. In a permanent camp it will pay the bass-fan to build a line-drying windless, which can be easily accomplished by the exercise of a little ingenuity. Never leave a wet line on a reel over night. Make it the rule of your life to care for the line the first thing after landing. It is surprising how soon a line will rot if not thoroughly dried.

"How long should a good casting-line last?" That is a hard question and can only be answered with, "That depends." Depends upon how much money you are willing to spend and upon how much care you are willing to lavish. I know of men who never use a line a second day, discarding the "old" line at the end of each day's casting. I can not afford it. I have used lines two and three seasons even, without losing a fish through breaking, but, then, I am an "old maid" when it comes to "pottering with tackle." At the end of the season I roll up the lines that are worth saving and seal them in tubes, the others I throw away. It is unwise to retain a line which manifests the slightest weakness. Turn your lines often so that the whole length receives equal wear. Perhaps you have never thought of it, but that portion of a 50 yard line which comes next the spool is seldom used. I am taking it for granted that you are not a tournament caster, and even if you were, you would find it somewhat difficult to cast 150 feet with a regular fishing line.

"Never neglect to test the end of your line before you attach the lure," a bit of advice which if acted upon, will save the bass-caster many a lure and perhaps the largest fish of the season. The whipping out of the line wears the end to such an extent that it becomes rotten. If you can break the line with your hands it should be broken before you attach the lure. Sometimes twenty feet can be so removed; sacrifice it ruthlessly, lest you mourn loss of lure or loss of fish or both.

To illustrate: Some years ago I invested a great big round dollar in a rubber frog, a lure which is very dear to me for lake fishing. Standing upon the shores of a wilderness lake, the only rubber frog within a hundred miles on the end of my line, I said to my companion boastingly, "See me touch the edge of that weed-bed out yonder." Now the weed-bed lay more than 100 feet distant, so I threw all of my strength and skill into the cast. The frog hit the weed-bed, but the line had parted just back of the leader. I spent that vacation without a rubber frog but I had learned my lesson. I found upon examination that fully fifteen feet of the line was rotten and worthless. Test the line carefully, thoroughly and often.

There remain but a few things to mention in closing this chapter. Did you ever lose a pike by having the fish "strike over," cutting the line? If you have, you promised yourself never to fish again without a

wire gimp or leader. It is a wise resolution, one worthy of observation. Now that the caster can secure wire gimp leaders with snaps and swivels, he is worse than foolish not to place a supply in his tackle-box. I am not acquainted with a more convenient and useful article for the fisherman's outfit. The snap holds the lure secure while casting, the fish can "strike-over" if he so desires, and the rodster can change lures instantly without tying knots. If anglers realized what a convenience and safeguard the leaders are, all tackle-boxes would be supplied.

The leader just discussed has a swivel attached, and one or two should precede every lure. If you question their value, just cast without one and then with one; you will be surprised to find that the line will kink and snarl in a wonderful manner when they are not used. The swivels can be secured alone, or in combination with snaps. I often fasten the swivel-snap to the end of the line, attaching the gimp leader thereto; sometimes fastening the leader to the line end, attaching the swivel below, connecting the latter with the lure, the object being, whether swivel or leader come first, to secure the advantage of a double swivel. I think I get better results by attaching the swivel directly to the end of the line.

Sinkers hardly have a place in a bait-caster's outfit, though the live-bait fisher should never be without them; however, under certain conditions the caster will find that to be able to add a little weight

to the lure will be advantageous. To that end I carry a box of split buckshot. With their aid the rodster can make a surface-lure perform like an under-water, add weight to a light lure for casting against the wind; indeed, he will be surprised how convenient they will prove. (Of course down in the bottom of your casting-case there lies a little package of old fashioned hooks, concealed even as a fly-fisher conceals his can of worms. Well, on the day when the bass refuse to rise and it looks as though yours was to be a fishless dinner, attach one of those hooks, with a sinker above it, dig a worm from a rotten log, and go down after a yellow-perch or rock bass.)

CHAPTER IV

CASTING LURES

As to who first succeeded in whittling out an artificial lure that would attract fish, history sayeth not. Many individuals claim to be the original discoverers of the "plug," even as many communities claim to have been its birth-place. The fact of the matter is, while the casting lure is a modern creation, artificial fish-getters are very ancient. When discovered the Indians were capturing fish with unbaited hooks of bone. I shall never forget watching an Indian take bass after bass with a bit of green willow twig to which he had attached a heavy hook. I can whittle out a lure, using "red willow" for a body, that will attract bass. How long such things have been used to attract and capture fish no man knoweth. However, ancient as artificial lures are, it was not until the multiplying reel was perfected, and the short casting rod came into being, that artificial bass lures reached perfection. It is extremely difficult to unravel the twisted history.

Elsewhere I have told of the lad who accidentally dropped the table-spoon over-board, and as with remorse he watched it dart and ricochet through the

water, saw a large pike strike at it fiercely. Such was the suggestion that resulted in the "trolling spoon." Traveling along another road, a group of anglers were whittling out minnow shapes, and taking fish with the crude lures they manufactured. Came the day when the two groups met, the spoonmen and the minnow-makers. The result was a combination lure, a minnow shaped body with whirling blades fore and aft. Later, quite recently, a genius placed the whirling blades within an opening made in the body. There are blades of many shapes and forms, though anglers believe some types more attractive than others, which is true; it should be added, however, that under certain conditions even the most abused of lures will prove a fish-getter, while the favorite will fail. There are three elements always entering into the problem: first, the habitat and mood of the fish; second, the shape and color of the lure; third, knowledge and skill of the angler. As to which is more important I leave the reader to determine.

Why do bass strike at the strange forms the rodsters affect? The answer is not easy. Personally I believe they think—if fish think—the object moving through the water is something good to eat, though I must confess that sometimes they seem to pursue simply because actuated by anger. I have found the elongate body, that is, the minnow form, most attractive. Why? Because it more nearly simu-

lates the minnow, one of the natural foods of the fish. Every angler has discovered that it is almost useless to use artificial lures when bass are lying deep, as in the middle of the day, hence they cast early in the morning and again at evening *when the fish are feeding in the shallows.* Some writers assert that bass attack the splashing lure because it interferes with their feeding, and I am sure that nine times out of ten the attack is made because the fish is hungry. It will be said at once in answer that bass are taken with undigested fish in their maws; indeed, even with tails of late captures protruding from their mouths. Granted, but live bait fishermen, still fishing, report the same thing. Obviously in still fishing there is no compulsion of excitement. The bass will glut itself just because it is a bass. We measure fish from a human view-point, and I beg to remind you that it is a long journey from that low form to our present high estate. If we could place ourselves in the fish's place, thinking(?) and seeing as does the fish, its ways would not be so mysterious.

As already remarked in the preceding paragraph, I have always found the minnow shaped body the most successful. No, it does not seem to be an important matter whether the large or small end travels ahead, or whether one end be larger than the other. The elongate form—the minnow shape—is the most attractive. Just glance over any representative collection of lures and you will at once discover that 99

per cent. are of this shape. Furthermore, almost as large a per cent. are of the distinct minnow type, with glass eyes to add naturalness; while numbers have fins, either of metal or painted on the body. Regarding the importance of eyes and fins, I am not altogether sure though I have carried on careful experiments for a number of years. To date my conclusion is that they are of little value. The long body will give better action in the water and lends itself admirably to hook attachment, and is hereby recommended.

In the matter of hook attachment there is a unanimity of opinion among those at all acquainted with the habits of the fish sought. Always the bass strikes from the side, retires to turn the minnow head foremost before swallowing. Never will he sneak up from behind after the manner of pike or pike-perch. The rear hooks are almost useless so far as bass are concerned. Striking from the side, if not impaled at the instant of impact, he goes free. At least one manufacturer has demonstrated the feasibility of a single hook, placing one upon either side the body of his lure. It is a success. There is no excuse or reason for the multiplicity of hooks one sometimes sees attached to a lure. I have several in my collection with five trebles; think of it, fifteen single hooks when two would serve every required purpose. More and more makers are coming to

reduce the trebles, two being the usual number and often two double hooks.

I am not altogether sure that a mere screw-eye screwed into the wooden body is a sufficiently secure method of attachment; I prefer to have the hooks attached to a center wire—where that is possible—running through the body of the lure. Naturally such an arrangement is somewhat more expensive but it is worth all it costs. The hook attachment should be secure, the hooks themselves of the best. Some anglers prefer a hook that will break before the line, then a snag loses part of its terrors for the lure itself is safe. Always the wise caster carries a spare treble, if he employs that style of lure, single or double hooks if they appeal to him. Ofttimes makers furnish their lures with both kinds of hooks, singles and trebles, sometimes with the weed-guarded, too.

The finish of the lure is of utmost importance, a cheaply made, half baked lure is a delusion and a snare; do not invest in them. Over and over again in this volume and through my department in *Outdoor Life* I have urged the importance of good tackle, and nowhere is the matter of greater moment than in the selection of lures. A good, well-finished lure can not be secured for a song, whether you sing rag time or oratorio. You must be willing and able to pay the price. Something for nothing can not be secured outside the advertising pages of a second

class magazine. The enamel should be of the best quality, two or three coats, baked in. A second quality lure soon cracks and chips. I have lures in my tackle-box which have withstood three seasons of strenuous casting—I require service from my "plugs"—while others have chipped the first day out. Remember the purpose of the enamelling is not simply to give a highly burnished surface, but to keep out the water. Once let a drop of moisture find entrance into the wood and it is all day with the lure. My advice to readers of these pages is, shun cheap department store plugs. Know what you want, why you want it, and *get the best.*

Much has been written, and more will be written, upon the subject of color. Perhaps no two casters will ever agree regarding the matter, for few study the question from the same angle. Granted that there is no single best color, for local conditions have everything to do with it; certain hues are more likely to prove attractive. If I were to be limited to a single color, as is well known by this time, I would without an instant's hesitancy pick out the red and white combination. Of course, enters the matter of local conditions. Consequentially I desire a wide selection of colors always in my tackle-box unless I know absolutely what I am going up against. Moreover, as intimated, I think red and white, in combination, comes as near being the universal attractor as one can secure. Naturally I do not demand the

1-3. Battle-scarred plugs.
4. Casting weight.
5-6. Lures that kick up the water.
7-8. All surface lures.
9-13. Surface-underwaters.
14-18. Metal-head attachments.

same shape and color when deep-fishing that I employ when "splattering" on the surface, all of which will be more or less thoroughly gone into when we discuss the various types later on—surface, surface-underwater, and weedless.

I have been carrying on a series of experiments which I am willing to admit are of questionable value though suggestive: of questionable value because we do not know that colors appear and appeal to a fish as they do to us even when seen through the same medium, suggestive because throwing some light upon color values in water. I made a contrivance with which I could study the lure under water. Unless of very bright color, looking up through the water, at a distance of four feet the lure became a black spot simply. Getting a white lure against a dark back-ground, such as an overhanging bank or fringe of trees, or a red lure, say, against the blue sky, caused the plug to stand out conspicuously. I found a vast difference between looking up at a lure against the light, and looking down upon a lure as from a boat, the light above. I was greatly surprised to find that the less conspicuous shades and colors were indistinguishable when seen through the water from any great distance. In under-water lures I found it extremely difficult to differentiate between a yellow perch, colored to life, and the green minnow type so common upon the market. Lengthy experiments have forced me to the

conclusion that, as a rule, when bass are not taking minnows it makes little difference whether or not the lure duplicates the prevalent food so long as it is handled adroitly. Consequentially, so far as my observation goes, more depends upon the skill of the rodster than upon mere color. The reader may be somewhat surprised to find the writer coming to this conclusion, but it is the result of lengthy experiments in many waters and under varying conditions.

I have fished with men using pork-rind, while I employed the best of artificial lures, yet the porkers caught two fish to my one. How many bass will a pork-rind attract in 24 hours, if you just let it hang in the water, think you? Suppose you try it. Pork rind is a good *lure;* I use the word advisedly; it is not a *bait, per se,* when kept in motion. Here is food for thought. Now, suppose we turn our attention to—

SURFACE LURES

The surface lure is a comparatively modern invention, or rather development of the casting plug. Logically it should be discussed last, because the latest member of the family to appear, but in view of its importance it should be given first place. I think there is no room for argument here. While there are times when the under-water is the availing lure, taking the matter by and large, the surface-lure is the best all around type for average casting. Of course the angler will take into consideration, first,

water conditions; second, time of the year; third, weather; fourth, moods and idiosyncrasies of bass at the particular moment. Which qualification destroys the force of the previous remark. If the reader pursues this chapter to the end he will discover why I have made this loop-hole of escape. I use under-water lures where I believe under-water lures should be employed, because that class of attractors are the most successful fish-getters under certain conditions.

The surface lure is the tyro's training school and the old hand's saint's-rest. For practice, learning how to handle the rod and thumb the reel, there is nothing like the simon-pure surface plug, the lure that will remain upon the surface even while the exasperated rodster takes his reel apart to untangle a bad back-lash, or hand-over-hand retrieves his line, while he devoutly prays it may be attached to the reel lying upon the lake-bed fathoms below, having "somehow" escaped from the reel bands. The angler using a surface or surface-underwater lure need never worry over the whereabouts of his lure, unless fishing a stream with a rapid current. One can not say too much in favor of the type for the foregoing reasons, and they are fish-getters, as will hereinafter appear. To my mind, as I have elsewhere pointed out in this work, the most efficacious school for the would-be caster is actual casting with surface lures over water inhabited by bass or other

fish. For practice casting the surface lure has all the advantages of the tournament weight, with the added advantage of actually duplicating fishing conditions.

The surface lure is more adapted to lake fishing than to river casting simply because lake denizens are more apt to be surface feeders. Mind you, I am not saying that bass do not feed upon the surface of rivers and surface lures should therefore never be used. All depends upon the character of the river; one with slow current and many obstructions is morally certain to produce surface feeders; while, upon the other hand, a deep, free river is apt to prove the home of bottom feeders. Where the current is swift and obstructions numerous, the surface lure will always manage to tangle up unless the angler is constantly on his guard. Pre-eminently the surface lure is a lake lure. Where the water shoals or weed-beds offer lurking places for foraging bass, there the commotion making lure is certain to prove a winner. For ten years now I have been experimenting with various lures, keeping my records with scientific accuracy, and I write with those records before me. The splash of the lure striking upon the surface of the water six or eight inches from the marge of the weed-bed or snag, attracts the attention of the bass, and he strikes instantly and ferociously, ofttimes knocking the surface lure high

in air, sometimes taking it with a second rush as vicious as the first.

I am often asked if the striking of the lure upon the water does not have a tendency to frighten bass and so defeat the very purpose for which created. An absolute answer is, of course, impossible, for the observer can not see all that is taking place beneath the surface. I much doubt if one out of—say ten bass, are frightened away. I have been a careful and painstaking student-angler for years and my notes record few incidents of plain fright. My method has been as follows: When a bass has manifested his presence by leaping for natural food, I have put my craft within casting distance, almost always getting a response instantly.

Once when casting on a narrow river I saw a large bass leap close to the far bank, and then glimpsed him as he darted beneath a log. The water was perfectly, almost abnormally clear. I cast well below the log, where the fish had been feeding. Instantly I saw him dart out from the other side and dash away. Manifestly that fish was frightened by the splash of the lure, though perhaps he had captured the object which had first attracted his attention and argued that a second splash was suspicious, which would be attributing a high order of intelligence to a mere fish. I presume the real reason for the fish's flight was because he caught a glimpse of my arm movement; furthermore, he may

have satisfied his hunger. (Parenthetically: I believe that I am largely successful in angling simply because I attribute almost human powers of reasoning to the game I seek. "Absurd?" Well, maybe, but think it over.)

Another much discussed question is the attractivity of commotion making lures, those lures with splashing paddle-wheels, so to speak. All depends upon the mood of the fish. There are days when nothing is quite so good as a certain lure much affected by me, which makes all the disturbance of a Mississippi River steamboat of the stern wheel type, a lure good along the edges of weed-beds when the water is glassy and the bass disinclined to bite. It actually would appear that such a lure *compels* the fish to rise; they must attack, willy nilly. Somehow these steamboat lures have never appealed to me from the view-point of sportsmanship, though that is probably mere sentiment. However, one does not see so many of the type these days, which is a matter worthy of comment. Looking over my collection, which while large is in nowise complete, I see but few of the commotion variety. As already remarked, I find them good along the edges of weed-beds early in the morning and again late in the afternoon when a midsummer calm has glassed the water and all Nature seems to withdraw within herself. As a river lure I have not found it very efficacious, the current playing havoc with its motion.

For the commotion lure light colors are best, though perhaps the matter is not one of importance, the attractivity of the lure being found in its motion rather than color. I have experimented at length here, and have come to the conclusion that nothing equals the pure white, though a dash of red or even black, will do no harm. While upon this question, why do not the makers give us jet black lures? Seen against the sky from below they are more conspicuous than those painted red, blue or white. One of the commotion lures was painted a jet black and tried out in all sorts of weather and water conditions. I found it very attractive on sunshiny days, and *after night had set in.* We are going to have more black floating lures in the future. While white has proven best on average waters, there are conditions existing where black seems more attractive. Given white bottom, clear water and bright skies, I would advise the rodster to experiment with black lures.

When the caster turns to the unemotional lures, he discovers that their name is legion. Some slip through the water, scarcely creating a ripple, others pile up a little wave ahead or shoot a couple of jets sky-ward, while still others dart and ricochet from left to right, or right to left, with a motion like that of a wounded duck. Which style is best? Frankly, I do not know, perhaps there is no "best." My preference, however, is for the lure with some mo-

tion. In form I prefer those with a band or metal ring at the head, thinking that it adds attractivity as well as erratic movement.

A great many of the modern surface lures are so arranged that they may be changed to under-waters by simply shifting a weight, changing a metal guide, or the point of line attachment. Indeed, few absolutely surface lures are being produced today; the general purpose lure has arrived. So to illustrate this paragraph I have selected a few lures from my collection which are absolutely surface lures, can not be changed to underwaters or semi-underwaters, are built as surface attractors. I have found these lures good alike upon lake and stream and under varying conditions of weather and water. When the bass are feeding upon the surface these lures will prove effective, as will many another in my collection. The surface lure is for surface fishing, so do not think they are unattractive when the fish are feeding deep and therefore do not win strikes. Use the lure the fish wants, not the one you want him to want. Many fellows write me that they have "thought up" something new in the way of a lure, but nine times out of ten I find that they have been working along preconceived lines regarding what bass ought to want, not what they actually do desire. There is still room for lures, especially of the surface type.

SURFACE-UNDERWATER LURES

As to whether the surface-underwater was an invention or discovery I am unable to say. I am inclined to think it the latter. Some one discovered that a stick whittled into a certain shape, if drawn through the water, would submerge, coming to the surface as soon as the tension on the line was released. Such—with hooks added—is the modern surface-underwater lure, though movement is produced by various schemes and attachments. I can well remember the first lure of the kind that came my way. I saw it in a tackle store window, the occasion of many a contemptuous remark, the butt of many a joke. While I, like other anglers, made all manner of sport of the thing, stole back and purchased it on the sly for a surreptitious try-out. Not that I thought it possessed any great virtue, but because I have never been able to pass up any new idea in tackle without investigating. It was not much of a lure as lures go in this year of grace, 1920, just a slant-nosed block of green painted wood, unlike any fish food, seen or imagined. That night I fished an unfrequented "bass hole" when I was reasonably certain no one would happen by. I cast and began to reel. Down, down went the lure. Now, Fate, Luck, or whatever it is that rules in the lives of fishermen, had its eye on me and my new wrinkle. First, a big pike took the lure, then a goodly bass connected up, followed at the next cast

by what Henry Guy Carlton calls a "humdinger." Perhaps, probably my success was the result of a combination of fortuitous circumstances, but then I gave, and still give, all the credit to that first surface-underwater.

The surface-underwater possesses many of the advantages of the underwater and none of its disadvantages. Of course there are times when the absolute underwater is the successful lure, as there are occasions and water where the simon pure surface lure is the attractive thing; the latter has been treated in this chapter and the former remains to be discussed. The great advantage of the surface-underwater is the same as that of the surface lure, it will remain upon the surface if the caster does not reel, coming to the surface whenever he stops. Its peculiar advantage is found in its ability to sound the depths at the behest of the caster. The motion of the lure is as erratic as an angler well can wish, brought about by the shape of the fore-part, fluting, or attachment. The first surface-underwaters used by me simply dove down, though to-day almost any movement can be secured, from an up and down wave-like motion to an erratic gyratory cork-screw. All else being equal, I think the more eccentric the movement of the submerged lure, the greater its attractivity. As to whether or not its resemblance to a "wounded minnow" has any bearing upon the matter is exceedingly problematical. Parentheti-

cally, I much doubt if we should speak of a lure as attractive, rather of its power to attract attention, for I am convinced that it is the movement and not the lure itself that impels the fish to strike.

As will be discovered from a study of surface-underwaters there is not as wide a divergence in shape of this class of "plugs" as there is of the simple surface lures. The minnow type is the prevalent form. Naturally a lure built to swim beneath the surface will be patterned after swimming animals; in no other manner can we achieve our purpose. It is exceedingly difficult to produce a quick side-wise movement, like the dart of a frightened minnow, unless you duplicate to a greater or less degree the form of the fish. Consequently as you will discover, that is the generally accepted shape.

A great many lures are submerged through weights or metal attachments, while still others dive because the head or body is shaped to produce that result. Naturally I may not mention all of any given type, simply mention a few illustrative of general principles. It is surprising what a change a single groove will make in the action of a lure. One much employed by me has a slash upon either side the body, extending from near the head well back; that lure will dive and richochet in a most confusing and attention attracting manner. Another has simply a hollow on the upper side, extending down to the under surface, giving it a shovel-nosed appearance;

what that lure will do when in the water is most surprising. Another maker has bored a tapering hole from near the head on the under surface diagonally up and back toward the rear; as the lure is drawn through the water, the water is forced in at the large orfice, back and out through the small hole. I know of no lure more fish-like in its movements. The grooving of the head is various, from the shovel-nose just described, to a simple quadruple fluted head.

Another method used to cause the lure to dive is to attach the line slightly back of the point of the nose, often used in combination with shaped head or metal attachment. The angler can alter the motion of a lure by simply attaching the line at a different point, though to remove the screw-eyes sometimes used is to break the enamel and so admit water to the wood, the disasterous consequences of which has elsewhere been pointed out. Some makers have a patent attachment, allowing three or four different points of line connection. Others allow the caster to handle the lure "either end foremost," the action differing with the connection. One can not enlarge too much upon the result of line attachment, or of reversing ends, even when the latter was not in the mind of the maker. A bit of originality on the part of the angler, combined with a study of lures will result in changing the action of many a familiar lure.

Not so long ago my leader fouled with one of the

side hooks, the lure darting from side to side in wide circles, and yet it was just that motion a three-pound large-mouth found irresistible. "Happened so?" Wait. I could not catch fish when I used the lure as the inventor planned it should be employed, but with the leader attached to one of the side hooks, I caught three bass. I give the reader the incident for what it is worth. My explanation at the time was that the bass were "lazy," and the slow-moving lure—to reel rapidly was to pull the plug out of the water—appealed to them; and then, the motion was "different."

I have already mentioned the metal attachments—collars, shovels, wings, etc., which are fastened to the lures to compel them to sound the depths. There is no doubt that the glittering of the metal also attracts the bass's attention, so serves a double purpose. As already remarked, so many of these various features are combined in a single lure that it is exceedingly difficult to write of a single attachment, or method of submerging separately. In some surface-underwaters, these metal disks or guides are attached in such a way as to resemble fins when the lure is drawn through the water. Undoubtedly we have not seen the end of the production of metal guides, instead, are only at the beginning. As one sits before a well supplied cabinet of lures he can not help being impressed by the infinite possibilities of the surface-underwater forms. I sometimes

imagine that the half-formed plan which I am cherishing in the back-chambers of my mind will result in a more attractive and successful surface-underwater than has yet been produced. That is the conceit of your dyed-in-the-wool caster.

With the surface lure it is the initial splash, the commotion at the beginning of the in-reeling, which attracts the fish's attention, while with the surface-underwater, it is the "lame duck" motion of the moving lure which inveigles the touchy bass to attack. The lure which travels in a straight line beneath the surface is not as attractive to the surface feeding fish as the one which dashes about in a sort of subaqueous Mad Dervish dance. But, as was emphasized at the beginning of this chapter, there are times when the fish prefer the all-surface lure, when they are feeding on the surface. For an all around lure, for use day in and day out, in all sorts of water, and under varying weather conditions, I would select the surface-underwaters, for they combine the good features of both the surface and underwater styles. As to which of the many lures upon the market to select is more than I know. I would not hazard a guess and be well assured it would be but a guess at best. I am always prone to smile when I read of some fellow who, after trying half a dozen or more lures without success, turns in desperation to "Prof. Blinkity Blink's Blunkity Blunk Plug," and captures a back load of heavy fish

in less than half an hour. "Don't I believe it?" Of course I do. Here is the truth: the day after, that particular surface-underwater would have failed, and some of the unsuccessful plugs won. Sufficient unto the day is the plug therefore.

UNDERWATER LURES

While undoubtedly underwater lures were the first to appear, recent months have produced very few, if any, new ideas in the type. It will be said that the surface-underwaters have all the advantages of the deep swimming lures and none of their disadvantages, which is in part true, but not wholly. That there is need for lures of the deep swimming variety I am firmly convinced, and so consequentially I expect some original lures to be placed upon the market. Since the now famous "Chippewa" appeared I can not remember a single underwater built after original lines. Perhaps I am wholly wrong in this, for no single individual may keep in touch with a subject of such vast proportions, though I think I am right a measurable portion of the time.

The deep swimming lure meets a well defined need for a "bait" when fish lie deep. There are days and days when bass will not feed upon the surface, even as there are lakes where they never do. The live bait fisherman meets the problem with heavily weighted hooks baited with frogs or minnows, waiting patiently for a "bite." Surface plugs are of no

avail and surface-underwaters, unless weighted to make them absolute underwaters, are almost lureless. I speak from years of experience and experimentation. I can take almost any surface lure, attach a sinker in front of the gimp of sufficient weight to attain the required depth, and catch fish when they haunt the bottom. However, there are underwater lures that will perform the service more satisfactorily. The angler can govern the depth at which the lure travels by reeling slow or fast. Of course the heavier the lure the faster it needs must move in order to keep free of the bottom.

It is surprising what a slow-moving underwater will accomplish deep down on a hot mid-summer day. Cast it out into deep water and let it sink well down before you begin to reel, then slowly retrieve the lure. I need not add that "any old place" will not do, bass have hot weather lurking places even as they have preferred shallows for surface feeding. I am acquainted with one bass-lake, twenty rods or so from the outlet of which there is a deep hole—the natives say "bottomless," of course—where bass retired during hot portions of the day. I discovered accidently that to slowly troll a spoon, *thirty feet under water,* was to stir those lazy bass to attack. Naturally it was only a step to underwater lures of the minnow type: they worked. On rivers, too, the angler often discovers that his minnow type of lure will bring net results in a manner truly surprising.

I am not telling you which lure to employ; that you must determine for yourself; all have taken fish and will take fish again.

It is truly surprising how attractive a simple wooden or metal minnow, unadorned by spoon or feather, will prove occasionally. Unfortunately the makers of that type of minnow apparently are not bass fans, for the hooks attached are trailers, while, as pointed out before, black bass always strike from the side. Not always, therefore, will the eager angler hook his fish, saying, perhaps, that the bass are "biting short," when they would be captured if only his lure were provided with a body hook. A rear hook is all right for pike, pike-perch and trout, but almost useless for side-striking bass. I have taken a well-known metal minnow—German silver —bored a hole just aft of the pectorial fins, or rather where those fins should be, attaching a hook. For the reader's information I will only add, it worked. The simple minnow, wood or metal, is a good lure for deep fishing, casting or trolling.

It is only a step, and a natural one, from the simple minnow, to the minnow shaped lure provided with whirlers, scintilating bits of metal fore and aft, which adds wonderfully to a lure's attractiveness. The angler can not help being impressed with the constancy of the minnow form in this class of lures, some round, some four-sided, others almost flat; all appearing fish-like when drawn through the water,

one so much resembling a perch that a human might easily be deceived. I have gone over my collection somewhat carefully and am surprised at the number of lures, from the factories of various makers, that closely resemble these lures. They have come to be called commonly, "Dowagiacs," though of a truth many have no right to the name, that being the property of the Heddon people, their "trade mark."

Now and then one happens upon an underwater in which the body itself whirls or moves, sometimes a blade within the body gives the whole lure an appearance of movement. I am a little astonished that makers have not developed the idea further, for such lures are winners always. In underwater fishing, when all lures fail, these may turn defeat into victory. I know anglers, fishers of lakes and rivers, who can not be induced to try any other type of lure, insisting that only those with moving bodies are truly attractive, thus proving their inalienable right to the title of anglers. Now we all know that almost any lure under certain conditions is enticing, that there is no such thing as a "best" plug; however, amid underwaters these are good. Here again the writer has some original ideas he hopes to work out in the years to come, ideas which, if they do not bring him fortune, may at least bring him a sort of fame. I like the "barber pole" lure for lake fishing, while the one with the "spoon" within the body seems more attractive in running water.

Remains to mention lures with additions, so to speak. There are many lures of the type upon the market. The buck-tail appendage covers the hooks and gives to the lure a very life-like appearance when drawn through the water. Just what the idea is where we see the minnow chasing the fly I can not quite make out, whether or not it is thought that the bass may choose between the minnow and fly I am not sure, but it will take fish. As will also that mica-covered plug, unlike anything that ever swam in the water. By the way, it was that lure which called my attention to the possibilities of black colored plugs, perhaps the coming color for certain waters.

Which brings us naturally back to the color question somewhat lengthily discussed in the beginning of this chapter. The rodster reading these pages will understand that almost all lures may be secured in an infinite variety of colors, from dark to light, though I think among anglers the great majority would vote for green, or green and white in combination. As has been pointed out several times already, there is no "best" color, all depending upon the time of the year and the character of the water fished. Take the lures mentioned in this chapter, the makers produce them in a great variety of colors, so that if the angler is wedded to any given shape or form he can secure it in the hue to match any water condition. My predeliction for red, or red and white in combination is well known; yet only the

other day, an angler with a *blue lure,* beat me in an hour's casting, fishing the same water from the same boat. Color is not as important perhaps as we think it is.

So I draw this discussion of artificial lures to a close, realizing how incomplete and unsatisfactory it is. Right now it is "up to date," but to-morrow it may be ancient history. Any day some ambitious and bold rodster may stumble upon a lure better than anything now in use. In these pages I have simply tried to show the lines of development, the while dropping a few hints which may be of more or less value to the bass fan. Remember always, of greater value than form, color, attachment or appendage, is the knowledge and skill of the caster. "Knowledge and skill," these are the two important requisites. While the big fish may happen to take the tyro's lure once and again, the rodster who takes fish day in and day out is the one who understands the habits of his quarry, and knows how to place his lure where it should go. The best tackle in all the world will not avail unless the angler possesses skill, neither will skill alone win without knowledge of fish. I presume that this chapter will come as a sort of revelation to some anglers, who do not know that there are so many lures ready for their use. My collection is probably in nowise complete, yet I possess nearly 200 lures of the "plug" type, from surface lures down through the list to underwaters. I

have studied them carefully, tried them out under varying conditions, caught fish with all types; but here I confess to you, the end is not yet, the ultimate lure has not been produced, perhaps never will be, but try your hand at it. What I have learned of the subject I have tried to set down in this rather lengthy chapter; may it be of some aid to the caster, and my further services are yours to command.

Note: The gathering and trying-out of these lures has covered a period of some twelve years, consequentially some probably can not be secured in the market to-day, nevertheless, they serve to illustrate the evolution of the "plug."

CHAPTER V

HOUSING THE TACKLE

The bait-caster faces no greater problem than that of housing his tackle, for the more valuable his outfit, the more anxious will he be to store it in a safe and get-at-able form. Parenthetically: your true devotee of the gentle art is not satisfied merely to have his "rods and reels and traces" stored "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt;" he desires that they be where he can get at them easily and quickly, even in the closed season. For the joy of actual angling is not commensurate with that of sitting, open tackle box upon the table, blizzard raging outside, fishing in retrospect and anticipation. Indeed, the tackle must at all times be in a get-at-able shape. While, as suggested, the angler with valuable tackle will desire a safe way of storing his possessions, the one who can afford only moderate priced tools should care for them with even greater solicitude. As often the pretty girl will have a plentitude of admirers while her plain sister sits as a wall-flower, so the expensive rod and reel will be cared for with loving attention, and the moderate priced outfit kicked about the wood-shed between fishing trips and fish-

ing seasons. "A place for everything, and everything in its place," is the slogan of your true disciple of Father Izaak.

A brief paragraph or two must suffice for rod cases, important though the subject is. The wood rod, of whatever material, should ordinarily be fastened to a cloth covered wood form, especially if there is danger of its receiving rough treatment; always, if the outer case is but a sack. Far better is the stiff case covered with leather. Some of these stiff cases are made of fiber, while others are constructed of metal, preferably aluminum, covered with sole-leather. The fiber case, though leather covered, is apt to warp and so present an unsightly appearance. In the stiff case a rod will not need the wood form, but should be provided with a partitioned velvet bag. Many of the cases upon the market are not of sufficient caliber; they should be large enough to accommodate two rods, so obviate two cases when two rods are desired. A good fiber case covered with imitation leather can be secured for $1.00, while a metal tube, covered with real leather will cost somewhere in the neighborhood of $5.00. The $5.00 case you can almost use as a hand-spike, while the $1.00 one may break under unreasonable treatment: both are waterproof and will protect the rod with jealous care. When a wood rod is fastened to a wood form, care should be exercised lest it be tied too tightly and so warped.

The steel rod is usually stored in a partitioned cloth bag, for it will not warp through exposure to the weather and is not easily broken; however, even for the steel, the handled leather case is a great convenience and protection. That De Luxe steel rod, mentioned when we were discussing steel casters, is provided with a beautiful partioned glove leather case closed with glove fasteners; as the rod is the last word in steel construction, so the case is the last word in rod receptacles.

Just one concluding word of admonition: if you are shipping a rod, be sure and fasten it to a firm support, even though the wood form seems strong. Recently I received a one-piece split bamboo by Parcel Post and when it reached me the form was broken in the middle, though the rod was still intact but possessed of an irreparable kink. (Of course, when tramping to a stream you will not carry your rod in a fiber case, the velvet form being sufficient and much less cumbersome, but if you value the rod you will handle it with circumspection.)

If an angler has considerable money to spend and delights in luxury, he will invest in a rod-trunk such as the salmon fishermen of plethoric bank accounts effect. However, I do not want the reader to think that I regard these trunks as altogether luxuries. The user of a one-piece rod such as was described in the opening chapter of this volume, must needs have his caster protected; the reader will remember

HOUSING THE TACKLE

1. O Reel should be carried in a bag, even if in a case.
2. Sole-leather case.
3. Buckskin bag.
4. Velvet-covered form.
5. Stiff sole-leather case.
6. Canvas case.
7. Fibre case.
8. Velvet sack.
9. Partitioned bag.

that the only indictment I brought against the long rod was the inconvenience of transportation, which would be largely obviated if checked as baggage. Rod-trunks are well made, and range in price from $10.00 for the cheaper, to $25.00 or so for the better grades. It might require some courage to unstrap a rod-trunk at a bass-inn, but even so the lover of a one-piece rod could endure the jokes with equanimity if he took into consideration convenience in traveling as well as the condition of his casters. Rod-trunks are going to be more common.

All that has been said of rods applies with equal force to reels. There is one best receptacle for the winch, viz., a hard sole leather case large enough to contain a reel when enclosed in its shammy sack. Even if the reel is to be carried in a tackle-box, as will hereinafter appear, it is unwise to neglect the leather covering, never under any circumstances, the shammy bag. I have had a reel-handle badly bent even in a leather case when carried in a suit-case. Naturally, when tramping to a stream, the angler will not carry the sole-leather case, but neither will he place the reel in his pocket without the protection of the reel-bag. When we were children we were taught that the "pleasant land" was made of "grains of sand," and a single grain is enough to wreck the finest reel ever made if it find lodgment in the bearings. This reel-bag the caster can make from any pliable bit of leather, closely woven cloth

serving at a pinch. Some years ago a friend sent me a beautiful tanned fawn skin, as soft and fine as shammy; from it we made many a reel-bag, as well as a number of other articles well worth while.

The last word has not been said regarding tackle-boxes, neither has the perfect box been produced. Nearly every bait-caster with time and opportunity has tried his hand at building a box, and as a result we have seen boxes varying in size from little hand cases up to veritable trunks. Every angler is wedded to his own ideas, thinks he has, or can produce the perfect receptacle for plugs, reels and tools. I have seen bait-casters clambering into a boat toting a tackle-box the size of a double suit case, in which reposed plugs without number, reels, tools, lines, revolvers, in fact anything a fisherman might need in his wildest moments, sometimes even a compartment for a flask of "liquid bait." "The game is not worth the candle." Such a case is all right for the house and camp, but to my mind is out of place in a boat. Oh, we need a small repair-kit of course, and a fair selection of lures; most decidedly we do not need a whole hardware store and the strange results of the wild imaginings of the tackle-maker. (See the next chapter on repair outfits.) There is nothing quite so elegant as the sole-leather box of course, but owing to its cost we are going to pass it with this word, for we are more interested in shape and size, I take it, than we are in material. If the rodster can

afford it, then I urge him by all means to purchase a sole-leather case; it is the finest, most elegant thing known to bass-fans and is well worth the price charged for it. Heavy block tin is perfectly satisfactory, and can be secured in almost all shapes and sizes to-day, certainly sufficiently varied to meet the idiosyncrasies of the most particular or peculiar angler. Suppose we start with a small box and work up to those of larger dimensions.

The first one we will consider is that made by the Moonlight Bait Co., Paw Paw, Mich. It is almost pocket size, indeed, can be slipped into a great coat pocket because of its round corners and flat shape. While large enough for the average angler, will hold sufficient tackle for a week-end or ordinary fishing trip; packs conveniently, owing to its shape, and is altogether about the best small box it has been my good fortune to stumble upon. It seems to me that the compartments might be better arranged, but then I find fault with every box as do all real casters. The compartments should be built in to individual order, though in fairness to the manufacturers I should add that one can select a box with almost any number and shape of compartments; however, as suggested, there is satisfaction in building your own "plug-stalls." The Moonlight box just mentioned is ideal for the man who goes out in the morning for a few hours' casting before the business

of the day, or it can be slipped in a hand-bag for emergency use when on business bent.

The Kentucky Stamping Co. makes a box from unusually heavy block tin, building a case that will stand hard usage. To the writer the discovery of this box was a veritable "find," for it filled a very definite need. The real angler will be impressed with the unusual construction—narrow and deep, with a shoulder-strap which is a great convenience for the shore caster, as it leaves both hands free at all times. The box contains three non-bendable trays with well arranged compartments, one tray being arranged for two reels. In the oval top there is a shallow compartment, closed with a hinged cover, ideal for hooks, leaders, or articles of that sort. Outside dimentions of the case are, 9 inches x 7¼ x 3¾. Can be carried in the hand if the angler so desires, being fitted with a roomy handle. It is exceedingly difficult to write of this box without dealing in superlatives.

There is nothing original or striking about the square box, it is the old time-tried and much used case, the one we have seen exposed for sale in the windows of tackle stores ever since the tin "cash box" was adapted to the caster's needs. Can be secured in almost any size and shape, with an infinitely varied arrangement of compartments and trays. My favorite is approximately 12 inches x 8 x 4, with a really convenient arrangement of compartments.

SOME TACKLE BOXES

1. "Shakespeare," carries rod and all.
2. "Moonlight," go in greatcoat pocket.
3. Compact, has strap for shoulder.
4. Old Reliable, square.
5. Straps on the waist.
6. What happens when there are no partitions in a tray.

The bottom is partitioned for twelve lures. (It is never the part of wisdom to place two "plugs" in the same section, for the far-famed love of Damon and Pythias is as nothing when compared with the affection of one multi-hooked lure for another.) Then, above these bottom stalls are two trays also fitted for plugs. The end is left open with space for two reels. The upper tray is full size of the box, with a few narrow compartments in one corner for sinkers, connecting links, wire traces, etc., etc. One-half of the upper tray is left undivided and is a great convenience. All in all I am inclined to congratulate myself upon my selection of trays and compartments, for, as I said at the opening of this paragraph, you can select anything that you desire, *almost*. In tin they range in price, according to size and finish, from 50 cents up to $8.00, or thereabouts.

Recently the Shakespeare people produced a "grown up" tackle-box which is bound to appeal to the owner of a short-jointed casting rod like the Bristol No. 33. In size this box measures 19 inches x 5¼ x 5⅛. Is built of the very best of heavy tin, decorated in fine shape. The bottom has compartments large enough to hold three reels in their cases, one long compartment that will easily accommodate two rods like the one mentioned above—any rod with joints under 19 inches—and one small compartment, 4¾ x 2¾, with tray. The only fault I can

find with this splendid article is the lack of compartments in the upper tray. It is a safe bet that if any angler were to place a dozen lures in such a tray they would rush together as iron filings rush to the poles of a magnet. One might leave the "plugs" in their original boxes, but the chances of wetting are too great. I have had a number of little tin boxes made, with covers that will fit snugly over top or bottom, just to carry individual lures. When not wanting to bother with any sort of tackle-box, two or three of those individual containers will slip into my coat-pocket without inconvenience; and when using an open tray, placing the covers on the bottom, I have compartments made to order. Sometimes, some wise tackle maker will supply the trade with my individual box, and I will not care if he patent my idea. If the maker will place a couple of clips on the underside of the cover to hold a card for the name and number of the lure, as well as the manufacturer's address, he will gain my everlasting gratitude. But to return for a closing word regarding the "Michigan," concerning which I am supposed to be talking, there is nothing in the market with which I am acquainted that can compare with it; while it will not take the place of any of the boxes heretofore mentioned, it fills a long felt want and, will I am sure, receive an enthusiastic reception from the fraternity.

CHAPTER VI

REPAIR KITS AND METHODS

Rods sometimes break, reels do balk, hooks may jam, hence this chapter. A man may spend a week, a fortnight, even a month, on lake or stream and experience no trouble, meet with no disaster; while upon the other hand, the first day, aye, even the first cast upon the first day, may result in a serious accident demanding tools, skill and knowledge. What angler does not remember the day the rod broke short off at the second ferrule, or when the reel unaccountably went on a strike, or the big pike jammed the one lure so the blades refused to revolve. To have missed one or all these experiences is to have fallen short of the inalienable rights of an angler. There is joy, always, in overcoming difficulties. In *retrospect,* a bad smash up, repaired, is one of the most enjoyable memories. So every caster's tackle-box should have its kit of tools.

Now, there are repair kits upon the market, complete with everything required for almost any contingency, costing anywhere from $2.00 up to $12.00 or thereabouts. Those outfits are good, well worth every cent they cost, but it may be that the angler

likes to potter with tools, building up an individual outfit to suit himself; if so I have some suggestions and a wee bit of advice to offer. There are a few tools and articles which are essential, absolutely indispensable, and should have place in the angler's tackle-box, or better, coat-pocket; while there are certain bulky articles, convenient but not actual requisites, which may be placed in the larger tackle-boxes. Narrowed down, then, we have two classes of tools and articles—indispensables and conveniencies. And it may be well for me to so classify the two groups, calling the first the "Pocket Outfit," and the second the "Tackle-box Kit."

Nine out of ten anglers do not like to be overloaded with paraphernalia, the tenth man is willing to tote a tackle-box as large as a Saratoga trunk. Now I am not saying that the Saratoga trunk tackle-box is not a convenience and delight; it is both; but the average man can not bother with a thing so unwieldy, if he has the where-with-all to procure it. By the same token a man can construct a pocket-kit, elaborate and bulky, containing, beside the essentials, what we may term repair felicities. However, we are now interested in the absolute essentials, those tools which we may need any day, or a number of times a day. One word of caution, in your anxiety to eliminate the superfluous, do not dispense with the essential article.

The following should be found in the pocket-kit

ROD REPAIRING

1. Removing ferrule with pliers.
2. Warming ferrule with flame of match.

3 and 4. Broken rod cut ready for cement.

5 and 6. Placed in vise and wound.

of every angler: 1, screw driver; 2, oil-can; 3, cutting pliers; 4, bit of rod cement; 5, skein winding silk; 6, coil fine copper wire; 7, file; 8, tube rod varnish; 9, pencil brush. Every caster will undoubtedly think of articles he would *like* to have, but they can be dispensed with. A pair of scissors would be apt to come in handy, but a sharp pocket knife will take their place, so I omit them. A word regarding that pocket-knife; let it be a two-bladed one and keep the little blade at razor edge to be used only in an emergency. To contain the rod-varnish nothing is quite equal to the collapsible tubes used for tooth paste and various toilet articles; if you can not secure a new one from the druggist, then empty and thoroughly clean an old one. Such a tube need not be large, for the caster will seldom need any great amount of varnish, though the lack of it may injure and even ruin a fine caster. The file should be of the flat variety and not overly long. I use a tool-handle containing an ideal reel-screw-driver, file, and thirty or so other useful articles, thus eliminating one necessary article and gaining thirty. The copper wire is unwound from the spool and coiled to save space. The silk is also wound upon a flat card for the same reason. Spools are always bulky. The bit of rod cement is wrapped in oiled silk; there is no need for a whole stick of the stuff. Let the oil-can be small and leak-proof, if there is such a thing. The reader will remember that I specified cutting pliers where

some repair men give round-nosed first place. Undoubtedly the round-nose are convenient for certain jobs, but one can secure a pair of flat-nosed for bending, pulling, etc., and yet have a side-cutting surface. Why carry two or three pairs of pliers when you can get along with one? For applying varnish I use a small artist's brush, slips into the combination tool-kit handle, one less article to look after. I submit that it would be exceedingly difficult to secure greater utility with the same amount of weight and cubic inches of displacement.

All these articles might be carried loose in the pocket, but in order to always have them get-at-able when needed, I have evolved a little pocket case of my own, not much to look at but very convenient. Made of waterproof duck, lined with flannel, the upper edge of the pockets being faced with stretched rubber elastic which holds each article in place if the case should be dropped while unstrapped. It is the very acme of simplicity, and for that very reason has appealed strongly to the anglers who have had reason to call upon me for sudden first aid.

Where the rodster is to be accompanied with his tackle-box, he can either drop the few required tools into one of the compartments, or he can use the fold above described. However, there are certain articles which I always leave in my tackle-box because so often convenient, though I do not advise rodsters to carry them when "going light." One of

the most convenient of these luxuries is a tiny vise, a toy one from the ten cent store may be made to serve, or the more expensive and durable machinist's will give better satisfaction. For holding a hook while filing, straightening a bent lure, for the hundred-and-one contingencies which may arise, there is nothing better; on a pinch the vise may be made to serve in place of a second pair of pliers. The round-nose pliers have a place in the tackle-box if space is not at too high a premium. A "regular" screw-driver may be carried in place of, or in addition to, the one contained in the handle of the "L. E. B. Tool Kit." Do not forget the pair of sharp pointed scissors, nor a good sized "rat tail" file. There is no good reason for multiplying tools just for the sake of multiplication. Where the angler can make one article serve two purposes, it is much better to do so than to carry two articles. By the same token, if a pair of flat-nose, side-cutting pliers can be made to serve the purpose of the three styles sometimes seen in tackle-boxes, is it not just as well? In fact, I believe simplicity and service to be the two biggest words in the angler's vocabulary. Anything that can be eliminated without serious loss is mere lumber.

The articles mentioned will be found amply adequate to meet any emergency and repair any repairable break. Again we are face to face with that age-old proposition—individuality—personal worth. One man, with a jack-knife and a bit of

twine, will repair a broken rod creditably and go on fishing; another individual, with the best and most complete outfit ever conceived, will bother away for half a day and succeed only in spoiling a rod. Do not jump to the erroneous conclusion that only the adept with tools, the natural mechanic, can become a rod-repairer; any rodster with an ounce of gray matter, a modicum of instruction, and an abundance of stick-to-itiveness may in short order become a first aid man worthy the name. I think I have covered the whole matter in the foregoing sentence. It is the individual's knowledge and not his tools only that count. Consequentially to dismiss the subject with only the question of tools discussed, would be a mechanical sin and a piscatorial misdemeanor; so we must go on to the use of tools, e'en though we repeat much of what has been said in other chapters. Remember, however, never forget for a moment, that the angler must experiment with windings, splices, loose ferrules, etc., etc., before he sets out on his angling expedition if he is to achieve field-repairs of lasting worth. The old saying, worn threadbare by much use, is mightiest truth when applied to the angler's game—"Practice makes perfect." As I have already intimated, this work comes more naturally to some than to others, but what any man has learned to do, the veriest tyro can, with patience and application, also accomplish.

If experience is the most valuable teacher, then

the sooner we submit to her tutelage, the quicker we will have our lessons learned. I mean simply this, we must learn how to repair worn, damaged and broken tackle, by repairing, so we must to work at once. No matter if our first efforts are somewhat crude and unsatisfactory; in time skill will come.

I will begin with the more simple operations, concluding with that somewhat difficult feat, splicing a broken joint. Perhaps the most simple repair is re-varnishing or re-shellacing. The angler should understand that the purpose of shellac and varnish is not simply to add to the appearance of the rod, but to render the joints impervious to moisture. Once let water seep in between the sections of a split-bamboo and it is only a question of time when the rod will break. There is no item in the care of tackle of greater importance than this—keep the rod well varnished. Buy the shellac and varnish from reputable rod makers or tackle dealers only. The best is none too good. Do not unless somewhat experienced, attempt to make your own shellac. If you must buy varnish of other than tackle dealers, get the very best coach varnish. There are two ways of proceeding, either you can remove all the windings, sand-paper the rod smooth, using at the last only the finest of sand-paper, finishing up with silk cloth or tissue paper; or you may, probably will, apply the shellac and varnish over the old windings. See to it,

however, that all frayed and loose windings are replaced before applying varnish.

Select for varnishing a warm day and a warm room free from floating particles of dust. Go over the rod carefully with a cloth on which has been sprinkled a few drops of benzine or gasoline to remove any dirt. Be sure the rod is absolutely clean. Begin at the top of the tip and work down, applying the varnish with a pencil-brush, rubbing out well. Do not flow the varnish on, the result will be a dauby appearing job. Take time to do the work in the very best manner possible. "That which is worth doing at all, is worth doing well." When completed, hang the rod, or joints, in a warm room free from dust. The rod should be allowed to dry for three or four days, a week or ten days being better, though much depends upon the character of the weather; varnish drying much more quickly in a hot, dry spell than when the air is humid.

As to whether or not the rodster should use both shellac and varnish will depend upon the condition of the rod; if well worn I should say employ both, if not, use the varnish alone. If both are used, at least a week should intervene between the coats. As to how many times a rod should be varnished during a reason will depend upon the use and weather to which subjected; ordinarily a coat at the beginning of the season should be sufficient. If used in the rain a great deal, then two or three treatments should be

administered. I once ruined a fine and expensive fly-rod tip by not taking care of it. Was in camp for two weeks of rainy weather, employing one rod and tip though I had other rods and a second tip for the rod used, a matter which any rod-lover can understand. One day the sections of bamboo let go—water had seeped in—and the tip "folded." As I write that loved tip hangs above my desk, a constant admonition to shellac and varnish.

What caster has not picked up his rod in the spring, or after a long dry spell in mid-summer, only to find the ferrules loose? That one should never attempt to cast with a rod with loose ferrules goes without saying. The first step in repairing is to remove the ferrules. If loose and un-pinned that is an easy matter. When you have your new rod made, ask the maker to leave out the ferrule-pins; they serve no good purpose and often are vexatious bits of metal. If your rod is supplied with pins, you must find and remove them; it is the first step. About the only way is to push the pins in so that the ferrule will slip over, usually it is next to impossible to get hold of them and extract.

The ferrules removed, clean away all the old cement. Warm the end of the rod, the ferrule first to be set, and the cement. The flame of a match will do. Now apply the cement to the end of the rod and pass the flaming match up and down, turning the rod the while until the cement is evenly dis-

tributed; now shove the warm ferrule home. That is all there is to it. With the un-pinned ferrules the job can be accomplished in a very few minutes. In removing ferrules the round-nosed pliers are very convenient, will not bend—"up-set" the ferrule. Do not attempt to use the small square-nosed pliers for the work; they are certain to ruin the edge of the ferrule.

In the great majority of cases when a joint breaks it breaks close up to the ferrule; there is a reason for this, as will appear in the next paragraph. When a rod so breaks there is but one thing to do, remove the broken end and replace the ferrule. Usually there is sufficient wood protruding to offer the flat-nosed pliers a hold. Holding with the pliers, pass the flame of a match around the ferrule until the cement begins to bubble out, the ferrule will then slip off easily; to re-set, proceed as advised above. If too large carefully reduce, using file and knife, the latter as a scraper. If the ferrule is fastened with an obstinate pin, or for any reason refuses to give up the wood, it can always be burned out. Heat a piece of wire—a knitting needle is ideal—until at white heat and push against the wood, working from the center outward. Do not heat the ferrule so as to discolor it. Let me say here, however, that more than once I have been compelled to stick the ferrule right in the fire, when on a stream without tools, and so burn the wood out. Ruins the appearance of the

ferrule, but it can be replaced with a new one later.

Many an angler has no doubt noticed that after some years of use his rod becomes soft and characterless, and has perhaps thrown it away as "worn out." Had he examined the ends of the joints, removing the ferrules, the chances are that he would have found the sections without glue for two or three inches. Just remove ferrules, re-glue, using the best glue procurable, or even rod cement on a pinch, replace ferrules and the rod will be as good as new. Probably the condition of the rod came about in the first place through lack of attention in the matter of shellac. I do not remember ever seeing the matter mentioned in the outdoor press and for that reason give it here, feeling sure that the fraternity will thank me for the information.

Probably no single repair requires as much skill, patience and forethought as a splice. Fortunate it is that seldom the rod breaks where a splice is necessary or possible; as already mentioned, nine times out of ten joints break close up to the ferrule, where the wood can be removed. When a rod breaks in the middle of a joint—it has happened to me just once—there is but one thing to do until a new joint can be secured, splice. A good splice can not be made hastily or without tools. Get away from the water and its enticements. Forget all about fishing. This is absolutely essential to a good job. Remove the windings for at least five inches—2½ either side

the break, supposing it to be square—and scrape away the varnish. Bevel each end, working slowly and carefully. Each beveled end should be in the neighborhood of five inches in length. In order to make these sections fit accurately the work must be done in a skillful manner. The rodster will be glad if he has a bit of fine sand-paper in his tool-kit. Lacking which he will resort to the file. There is just one way to succeed, that of the home dressmaker, "cut and fit." When the sections are as nearly perfect as it is possible to get them, warm both ends—bevels—and smear with rod cement. The first aid man will be more than glad if he has that toy vise mentioned a while ago, for it is exceedingly difficult to get along without something of the sort. Again warm the smeared surfaces with the flame of a match, place between the jaws of the vise and screw home. Now, while the sections are held in the vise, the windings can be begun. (For method of winding see following paragraphs.) The chances are that the caster will use silk though there is a fine, hair-like copper wire on the market which is excellent for field-repairs; a splendid plan is to use the copper wire where the ends of the splices fit against the outer surface, for they can be drawn out without danger of breaking. Begin about half an inch from the end of the splice and run over on the perfect section for about a quarter of an inch or so. Now place two narrow windings of wire close up to the

ROD REPAIRING

1. Beginning winding.
2. The draw-loop.
3. End almost drawn through.
4. Completed all but cutting off end of silk.

vise, upon either side. Fill in with silk, or even cover the copper with silk, shellac and dry.

I have taken a section from a pin about a quarter of an inch long and sharpened both ends, inserting half way in each end of the splice. Easy matter with the aid of brad-awl found in the pocket tool-kit. Two of these pins will keep the sections in place, no matter how much "end-pull' there may be. I have advised the use of a vise, though one can dispense with it and yet produce a creditable splice. Hold the sections in place with tightly drawn copper wire, even if later it is removed when the silk is wound on. Let me say here that I once repaired a fellow fisherman's rod, the only tools or aids being a jack-knife, ordinary casting line and rod cement; the splice held, too. Later he shellacked the windings, and to the best of my knowledge is using the rod yet.

In order to be able to splice properly one must know how to lay a winding, in any event must know how to replace a frayed or broken winding. It is not the part of wisdom to allow three or four windings to disappear from the rod, paving the way for disaster. With the photographs herewith reproduced there is little need for explanation, that which is required being found beneath each picture. Do not attempt too narrow windings at first, they are more difficult and less satisfactory to the novice. Always keep the silk moderately tight but do not break it. Take pains to lay the strands as closely as

possible. After the winding is finished and the end pulled under, the silk can be pressed snugly together, using the back of the knife-blade for the purpose. Always the winding should be shellacked and allowed to dry for a few hours at least, better days, as advised in the paragraph upon shellacking.

The wise angler will carry one or more extra line-guides in his kit, for once in a thousand years a guide is broken, and while there is small chance that he will be found in the thousandth year, yet he may. In placing the guide upon the rod, line up with the others and mark the place with a pencil. Begin the winding beyond the guide, which has been fastened temporarily with a few wrappings of silk, and work toward it. When the wrapping covers the shank of the guide it should be ended with an underdraw; never pass the silk over to the other shank—run under the guide—for to do so is to increase the chances for a broken thread. If the rodster wishes to wind under the line-loop, he will begin again. Wide windings are never the part of wisdom, for the simple reason that a break means the replacing of the whole winding. I always use three windings for every guide. When I desire a long winding, say an inch wide, I divide it in four sections of a quarter of an inch each. Again, continuous windings are dangerous.

Sometimes a tip-top breaks, again "once in a thousand years," and you or I may draw the thousandth;

but often they come off and must be replaced. The *modus operandi* of replacing a tip-top is like unto that of a ferrule. If the rod is broken short off close up to the end of the tip-top ferrule, as is usually the case, heating will ordinarily loosen sufficiently to remove, but always the hot wire will burn out. It will be necessary to pare down the wood slightly before re-inserting; do it with utmost care, employing the file largely, or knife-blade as scraper. Do not attempt to shave down lest the knife slip and ruin the tip. Take my word for it and do not experiment. If the tip-top itself is broken—has happened to me twice—remove and replace with a spare one which should be in the kit of every caster. Ordinarily casting rods are supplied with two tips, which is as it should be, then if one breaks the angler need not stop for repairs until he has ample leisure. The point that I would make is that the caster should know how to repair, even in the field if necessity should so require.

We have covered the ordinary repairs which a caster will be called upon to make, though any day something may happen out of the ordinary; against those accidents I have no word of advice. The caster will of course always keep his hooks sharp, that is understood, for penetration is needed in order to impale a bass. He will also see to it that all his lures are ship-shape, no blades bent or gimps out of order. He may desire to make a few split buckshot,

or strengthen a pearl wobbler with a wire running from the upper ring to the lower. Oh, there is any amount of little things to do, for which the angler will find ample use for the simple tools mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. And believe me, it is rare fun to potter with repair work, second only to the full joy of making things. From a knowledge of how to repair it is altogether possible that the angler will go on to the actual construction, building a rod for himself, or producing a wonderful new plug or lure. It is a good plan to experiment with an old rod, rewinding, splicing, re-setting ferrules, doing all that may be required in the field. Experiment and experiment. Keep at it. Do not give up. You can if you will. And here is wishing you all the success and failures needful to your training.

PART II
METHODS

CHAPTER I

A FIRST LESSON IN CASTING

To attempt to learn how to cast from printed instructions is like learning to swim from photographs of expert swimmers in action. You remember Sir Somebody-or-other who placed a frog in a basin of water, and, mounting his library table, copied as best he might the actions of the amphibious animal; all in order that he might become an expert swimmer without going near the water. I imagine the gentleman met his death by drowning.

There is just one road leading to casting skill, and that is, much casting. While I strongly urge "back-yard casting," I realize full well that mere skill and accuracy will not make an expert fisherman, though you may become a successful angler without either of these important requisites. You can learn how to get out your line without creating a back-lash and how to thumb your reel—the former depends upon the latter to a great extent—but you will never learn how to cast with skill and purpose until you actually begin to fish.

I enjoy practice casting in the back-yard, and often go down to the pond when there is not a ghost of a

show of hooking a fish, in order that I may duplicate actual fishing conditions, and cast by the hour. But I am an old hand at the game. I learned to cast by casting where I hooked an eight pound pike at my third bungling attempt. That one wolf of the waters taught me more about how to handle rod and reel than all I have ever read upon the subject. However, printed instructions have their legitimate place, and it is my purpose in this chapter to tell the novice how to set about acquiring casting skill; perhaps in due time lead him to bank and boat, and instruct him in actual fishing methods. I have read many articles upon how to cast, but am free to confess that they have helped me little. The simple instructions which "Heddon" gives in his tackle catalog are about as satisfactory as anything I have seen. So, you see, I could dismiss this topic with a few words, but am not going to do so; I hope at least to show the angler what *not* to do, looking back over my schooling for hints, so fore-warn him. (The reader undoubtedly is acquainted with the old saw regarding the man fore-warned.) Surely I have said enough in this preliminary word to caution the reader against expecting too much from this chapter.

While, as I said, I learned to cast in actual fishing, back-yard casting teaches the rodster how to thumb the reel, and if he be the right sort of a man, accuracy and distance. After once the tyro has learned to handle the short rod he will derive almost

A LESSON IN CASTING

1. Beginning the cast.
2. Second position.
3. Third position.

as much pleasure in casting where no fish are, as he will from dropping his lures in water alive with bronze-backs.

The initial step is, of course, to set up the rod. See to it, if the rod is a jointed caster, that the ferrules are pushed home, having first anointed the male ferrule with a drop of lubricant. (Rubbing the male ferrule in the hair will provide sufficient oil, if you have any hair on top of your head, which the writer possesses not.) To "throw the rod apart" is not an unusual happening, but none the less vexatious for all that. Next place the reel on top the rod, with handle extending to the right. With click on, to prevent over-run, draw out enough line to thread through the guides and return from the tip-top to reel. Set the rod up between your knees; do not lay it down unless sure the boatman—the *boatman, of course,* even if casting on the lawn—can not place his foot upon it. Now reel up the lure, or weight, to within six inches of the tip-top. Slide back the click; never attempt to cast with the click on; to do so is to spoil the cast and soon ruin the best of reels. It seems almost superfluous to mention the matter, yet I have seen men actually trying to cast with the click shrieking staccato oaths. I never use the click even when playing a fish, for I had rather wear out my thumb than the bearings of a $25.00 reel. But the tyro is ready to cast, lure within six inches of tip-top.

With rod held firmly in right hand, thumb pressing against the reel-spool to prevent its turning, the student should bring the rod back over his shoulder until the lure hangs slightly back of his head. He should not throw the rod far back, as it is bad form and unnecessary. Just beyond the perpendicular is right. When he brings the rod up for the preliminary cast, he turns it so that the reel almost stands upon its head and keeps it in that position during the entire sweep. "There is a reason," as Post says. If the reel is held on top of the rod, the thumb pointing along the rod becomes anxious to aid in the cast—to "do something"—presses down without the caster's knowledge, bringing the cast to an unexpected end. My friend, the Professor of Psychology up at the college, explains this involuntary act of the thumb, using many high-sounding and mouth-filling words which I am sure explains the thing to himself; however, because of the lack of space, I accept the fact, and let it go at that. About the only successful way of obviating the trouble is the one advised, holding the reel almost vertical during the entire sweep of the rod. In bringing the rod down from the upright position, it should be accomplished with a quick, snappy movement. It is not strength that counts, I say that even remembering the ball-pitcher-like gyrations of certain casters I have watched in action. Let the rod do the work, that is what it is for. The amateur will be surprised, once

he catches the knack, that little strength is actually required in order to shoot out the lure a considerable distance. "One." Bring the rod up until slightly beyond the perpendicular. "Two." Down until the rod is almost horizontal. That is all there is to casting save "thumbing the reel," "spooling the line," and a few other things. "Thumbing" deserves a paragraph all by itself.

When you have learned to correctly gauge the magic pressure of that first digit, you will never have a back-lash or any casting trouble, which is tantamount to saying that "thumbing" is the secret of successful casting. And it is. If too much pressure is applied at the commencement of the cast, the reel stops suddenly, and the cast dies "a-bornin'." Upon the other hand, if not enough pressure is kept upon the rapidly diminishing roll of line, the spool soon over-runs the lure, the line curls under, and that bane of the bait-caster's life results—a back-lash. As I have elsewhere put the matter: the handle of the reel may be considered as a balance-wheel. The cast is made. The spool simply surrenders enough line to keep pace with the initial velocity of the lure, but soon gravitation, air pressure, weight of the line, and a hundred-and-one other things combine to retard the hasting lure; regarding all of which the whirring reel and balance-handle fly-wheel remains blissfully unconscious, spinning away for dear life, giving line faster than the lure can handle it. Very simple.

Some have thought that by eliminating the reel-handle we would dispense with a great deal of the trouble, and so we have the free-spool, a really splendid winch which has been discussed in the first section of this book, but even the free-spool must be thumbed. No, in all but those reels provided with the self-thumbing mechanism, all depends upon the sensitiveness and sensibleness of the ball of the pressing thumb. *You* must learn to thumb the reel and no man may teach you. The amount of pressure required will depend upon the weight of the lure, character of the rod, quality of the line and reel, etc.; in fact, so many elements enter into the problem which the caster alone can determine, that, in the slang of the day, "It's up to him." The only way to thumb, is to thumb.

Pressing the ball of the thumb against the rough surface of a rapidly revolving line-laden spool is rather severe upon the thumb, as the line is more or less rough and saturated with water. Some casters use a "thumb stall," or wear a glove, though either destroys that fine control which is possible without. As a consequence more and more casters are coming to employ a method known as "thumbing the end-plate." Instead of pressing the thumb against the line, it is pressed against the end-plate. One advantage of the method not often mentioned is found in the fact that the size of the end-plate never alters, while the caliber of the spool grows less as the cast

lengthens, necessitating a constant changing of the position of the thumb. Obviously for such thumbing the end-plate should be large enough to offer room for the thumb, and therefore a larger reel is recommended. Personally I do not like the method, but must confess that after a day's strenuous casting, the ball of my thumb is sometimes a sight to behold.

While discussing the subject of thumbing is a good time to mention a kindred matter, spooling the line. No caster can successfully thumb a reel unless the line has first been properly spooled. Spooling the line properly comes before thumbing the reel. Care must be taken to lay the line perfectly level and distributed evenly from end to end of the spool, no matter what the haste or excitement when reeling in, even if playing the record fish of the day. Should the line be allowed to "pile" in one place, it will inevitably tip over and loops be wound under; when the next cast is attempted, the rodster will discover that he has one of the worst varieties of snarls—back-lashes—to untangle. Unless he is using an easy-apart reel, can get at the spool readily, he will be tempted to attack the tangle with his jack-knife, a method somewhat destructive of a cent-a-foot line. Eternal vigilance alone is the price of a well retrieved line, unless the caster owns and employs a level-winding reel, for which I expressed a predilection in the first half of this work.

The greatest temptation which the would-be

caster has to overcome is that of trying for distance before he has acquired accuracy. Once he has learned the A, B, C of casting—the three movements in getting out the lure, thumbing the reel, and spooling the line—let him turn his whole attention to acquiring accuracy. It is far more important in actual fishing to be able to place the lure in the center of a spot the size of a wash-basin, than to shoot it 150 feet, say, not knowing where it is going to strike. (More bass are caught under 50 feet than beyond.) In the beginning of practice work the wise student will not attempt to cast over 10 feet, and will keep at that distance until he can hit a spot the size of his hat four times out of five. He will not increase the length of his cast until he has acquired absolute control of his lure for a given distance. He will add to his cast grudgingly, foot by foot, as he wins it. This, then, is the caster's golden rule: keep your accuracy, distance will come all in good time. To get more line out than the other fellow is not the thing to strive for, but to put the lure in the little pockets of open water where the fish lie. The reader may now think that I am overrating the importance of accuracy, but later, if he acts upon my admonition, he will rise up and call me blessed. Do not think that I undervalue a long cast; there are occasions when ability to lay a long line will prove of utmost worth; but as I said a moment ago, in actual fishing, more bass are hooked within 50 feet than over. But what

advantage is there in getting out 150 feet of line if the caster is unable to hit the likely bit of water? Bass do not lie in "any old place," as I shall try to show later on. The lure must strike just right. Second only to knowledge of the fish's habits is accuracy.

The tyro will never become a first class caster until he learns to take into account the casting qualities of different lures, some offering greater resistance to the air than others, while the matter of weight also enters in. I am compelled to believe that within reasonable bounds, the shape of the lure plays almost as important a part in the casting problem as does the matter of weight; at any rate, the rodster will discover that there is a vast difference in the handling of lures of the same weight. The wind also must be taken into consideration, and in long casts allowed for. All of this knowledge can be acquired in practice casting as successfully as in actual fishing.

In the foregoing preliminary instructions I have been talking of the overhead cast as it is the one of utmost importance in average fishing, the only one to use in a boat with a companion, but the side cast is also of value if the rodster intends to cast from the shore. In the latter cast the position of the reel is the same—almost vertical to the rod. The tip of the rod is held back about even with the hand-grasp—level—and swung well back of the body for

the beginning of the cast. The rod is not *raised* but swung *around* the body from the beginning of the cast. The rod is not raised but whipped sidewise. Good, as the reader can readily realize, for casting under trees, and a cast for the bank fisherman to perfect. I am well aware that some anglers poke all manner of fun at the "side-swiper," as they dub the man employing the side cast, but outside of a boat it is a very convenient method.

What I am pleased to term in my own mind the "underhand cast," begins even lower down, at about the height of the knees, and swings upward as the cast progresses until the tip of the rod is shoulder high. Once the student catches the trick he will be surprised to find that he can get out a vast amount of line. But for control and accuracy, always employ the overhead method. As I have already intimated, the side cast—"side-swipe"—is very dangerous to a companion. I was casting with a man from India a few years ago, when suddenly something struck my head like a thousand of brick; it was a multi-hooked plug. Fortunately I was wearing a wool hat, pulled low to protect my eyes from the rays of the setting sun, otherwise I would have been cruelly hurt. Always sit down in a boat when casting unless it is built on the lines of a mud-scow. By the way, in practice casting it is a good plan now and then to attempt the sport from a chair. Just place the chair out upon the lawn and, standing on it, try

and hit a spot 20 feet away. You have my sympathy if the neighbors see you.

In concluding this chapter I must add a word or two regarding playing the fish, though the matter will be treated at length in the chapters dealing with actual fishing. In retreiving the lure the tip of the rod should be pointed almost directly at the in-coming plug, for usually bass attack as the lure moves through the water; held so, the rod is in the best position to strike the fish when it reaches the plug. Swing the rod quickly to the right and upwards until it reaches an angle of say, 45 degrees; keep it so with a constant strain upon the fish. (Ordinarily a bass will attend to the strain.) If the fish leaps from the water—"goes into the air"—hold the rod in readiness to swing either to the right or left in order that you may keep a taut line; if the rodster neglects to do this, the fish may "shake out" the hook and so the "biggest bass of the day" be lost. Play your fish, do not let him play you. If any one loses his head let it be the fish. More bass are lost on account of blue funk on the part of the angler than for any other reason.

CHAPTER II

LANDING TOOLS AND HOW TO USE THEM

History tells us that Austerlitz placed the iron crown upon Napoleon's brow, while Waterloo swept it off. There is no victory until the battle is won. No doughty bronze-back is netted until he is netted. Which is but another way of saying that more fish are lost at the net's edge than at any other point of the game. I think it was Napoleon who said that God was on the side of the biggest guns, a statement more witty than true; which, applied to bass fishing, would mean that landing tools are of utmost importance. While I am ready to concede that landing tools should be of the best, indeed must be, I wish to assert that the angler must know, first of all, how to play his capture, lest he have no opportunity of using them.

The reader undoubtedly remembers the old copy-book slogan: "Drive thy business or thy business will drive thee." So the bass-fisher—any angler as for that—must determine in his own mind that he is going to conduct the fight from start to finish, therein lies the secret of success. Never wait for a fish to reveal his tactics; in the slang of the day, "beat him

to it." Force the battle, always. Do unto the fish as the fish would do unto you, only do it first. Before the rodster can use his landing-net or gaff he must have exhausted the fish, so the first half of this chapter will be devoted to a discussion of how to conduct the fight, after which we will take up the discussion of landing tools; however, of course more or less must be said of the tools as I work along, so I ask your patience if I seem somewhat prolix and repeat myself now and then. Remember always, the secret of successful fighting is found in the above remarks. Say with rough Walt. Whitman, "I ask not good fortune, I am good fortune." That wins.

I have already briefly discussed the strike, but as every ichthyic battle begins at that point, I may as well "begin at the beginning," as the children say, even though I repeat myself. The rod, in retrieving the line, should be pointed directly at the incoming lure so that the angler may strike effectively by swinging the tip sharply, either to right or left as conditions may demand. Right here we may as well get the matter of terms clearly in mind, so far as this volume is concerned. The bass *"rises,"* the angler *"strikes."* The bass "rises" when he comes to the offered lure, the angler "strikes" when he seeks to set the hook in the fish's jaws. This seems to me the logical use of the two terms.

Often, usually, the bass hooks himself, so fierce is his rush, so ferocious is his attack, though there are

times when it does not occur unless the angler does his part; and always, unless the line be kept taut as a fiddle string, there is a chance that the lure may be ejected. By striking, I do not mean a tremendous jerk, that is never necessary and always destructive of light tackle; simply a sharp swing sidewise, a movement comparable to that of the fly-fisherman when he sees the swirl of the rising fish. Personally I think a taut line immediately after the fish reaches the hook is of greater importance than the strike.

But the angler has met the rise with the strike, and hooked the fish, now what shall he do? Play his capture, of course, the most interesting and fascinating portion of the game. Many times I have hooked and played fish, only to release them after they had given up and surrendered. Throughout the battle the rod should be held at about an angle of 45 degrees, with tension enough upon the fish to bend the rod, so that the spring of the latter will be brought to bear upon the capture. We play the fish from the reel it is true, but it is the back-bone of the rod that should weary the antagonist, and not the reeling in and paying out the line. Remember to play the fish with the rod. Again if the angler's rod is bending he will know that he has sufficient strain upon the bass to prevent disaster; disaster is more than apt to come if he for a single moment forgets to do the fighting. Seldom do angling writers mention the spring of the rod in connection with the

battle, usually enlarging upon the cast; truly if the rod lacks resiliency it is a poor caster, but for the same reason, it is a poor tool with which to play a fish. Sometimes I use a six-foot-six rod, just for the fun of seeing it bend, though experience has proven that it is in nowise as good a tool for the work as the shorter one.

There is another reason why the rod should keep a constant tension upon the fish. The leap of the bass has found its way into song and story, and justly so. The aerial gymnastics of the rainbow trout are not as confusing, and pound for pound, not as tackle testing. I know of no fresh-water fish that will put up so satisfactory a battle from every point of view as will the American black-bass. Given sufficient slack line, he will send your cherished lure catapulting over the water. Just the other day a correspondent told of a bass that "shook his lure as a terrier shakes a rat," which, of course, is a manifest impossibility. The bass shakes his whole body, though how he does it is something of an enigma. I know of nothing more confusing than the leap, and because confusing it often spells disaster. "Pull him down," say some authorities. Let him go, I say. It is never necessary to "pull him down," a taut line is all that is required. Do not "side swipe" the bronze-back, he is too noble a warrior to be treated with indignity. Let him leap, but as the angler hopes to conquer, he must see to it that the fish gains no

slack; rod and reel must both be brought into play to checkmate the latter, though he will go into the air again and again in his frenzy and anger, hoping to rid himself of that stinging, clinging thing fast in his jaws. It is the leap of the bass that places him gills and pectoral fins above any other fresh-water game fish of equal size.

There is considerable individuality about *Micropterus,* after all; there is no telling what any given fish will do. Granted half an opportunity, he will go into the air, ripping the singing line through the water in a way to stir the blood of the most phlegmatic, or he may go to the bottom and sulk like a school-boy bereft of recess. Sometimes a sulking fish is something of a problem, for if he seek out the depths in which to do his ruminating, it is up to the angler to stir him up, not an easy task. With good tackle he may be "pumped up," after the tactics of salmon fishermen; simply reel the tip of the rod down to the surface of the water and lift, praying the while that everything will hold. In playing any fish the angler should seek to keep the battle on the surface; fortunately, the fish that takes the lure upon the surface usually fights there. The sulking fish is a dangerous one, the angler has no means of knowing what his capture is doing down there in the depths, so, if possible, keep him moving. Remember what was said in the first paragraph of this chapter.

LANDING TOOLS

1. Hand nipper for bass.
2. Folding net, all goes in handle.
3. Folding net.
4. Gaff hook to fit net handle.
5. Folding net for man who waded.

The ideal bass water, from *Micropterus's* viewpoint, is well supplied with snags, and it is dollars to doughnuts that the sulking fish is worming his way between the rotten ribs of some wrecked Hesperus, or forcing his weary body beneath some water-logged tree-top. No other fresh water fish will so quickly avail itself of natural refuges; with the bass, any stick or stone may become a haven of refuge and he seeks it forthwith. Nine times out of ten a snagged fish is a lost fish, though all depends upon the character of the snag. Once under a log, he will seldom return in the same direction, though we have all seen them do it on occasion. If the water is sufficiently shallow so that the rodster can observe his capture the problem is not quite so complex, but in deep water, where the angler must fight through sense of feeling alone, the odds are all in the bass's favor. I bet on the fish. A single stick up-turned in the water is all he asks; he wraps the line around it with devilish ingenuity, though perhaps the stick becomes as much of a puzzle to him as it is a problem to the irate angler; he winds the line around it because he must swim some-whither, and if he frees himself, or the outraged angler breaks his line, what brooks it. In the matter of a snagged fish, I can only say, don't let it happen.

That reminds me of an auspicious bit of angling bad luck of a few years ago. I was shore casting around a lake just fringed with down cedars, their

white and menacing bones protruding from the shores "like quills upon the fretful porcupine." I could just manage to get around their ends without going in over the tops of my waders. No bass enthusiast need be told that those cedar tops and sunken logs were appreciated by the bronze-backs. It *was* good fishing, also problematical fishing: every other bass snagged. Well, at the end of a particularly bad top I had a vicious rise, the bass knocking the floating lure high in the air. I cast a couple of times without result, then backed up and made my way around on shore. Perhaps an hour afterward I returned to the spot, waded quietly out to within casting distance and sent my lure hurtling through the air. It struck just where I wanted it to with a resounding splash. Again Mr. Bass rose, calculated the distance just right, and was on. Out into the lake he went, ripping the line through the water in a way to gratify my heart; turning, he came back with all the speed of an ice boat in a quartering wind. Then the unexpected and inexplicable happened; I lost control of the reel, my thumb played me false and my fish was under the white bones of a cedar. I could see him plainly, and realized that he was what I suspected, the record fish of the day. I desired him badly because I knew there was about as much chance for a rich man to enter Heaven as there was for him to enter my gaping creel. I tugged on the line but the fish would not stir. "Hooks solid in

the log!" I groaned. The bass began to struggle and I moaned, "He'll tear loose and leave me solid!" But no, the fish somehow got that multi-hooked lure back through under the long, up amid the out-reaching branches, following the same road along which he entered, and was out in the lake in open water once again. I put on the reverse immediately, churning water like a Mississippi River stern-wheeler, backed away from the menacing top and played and netted my fish. What was your question, Jim? "Did I ever tell of *losing* a fish?" Ah, those stories are not worth telling.

In playing a fish, play him. I mean simply, keep him moving. One authority advises guiding him in figure eight movements. I am not so particular, sounds too much like elocutionary drill in gesturing. Just keep him circling around, or moving out and back, anything is better than allowing him to regain strength. The recuperative power of a black bass is simply passing belief. Sometimes, at sight of the net, he finds sufficient strength for one last flop, the flop that for him spells liberty. (Never count your fish until they are in the creel!) I know of nothing more pathetic, and withal regal, than a black bass defeated but not vanquished, waiting for the net. Royally he fights and royally he surrenders, dorsal fin erect in defiance. The black bass never strikes his flag even when conquered. Remains, the landing tools and how to use them.

To the point where the bass gives up the struggle, whether the angler fishes from a boat or the bank, wades or rides, the battle must be conducted in essentially the same manner; now that the fish lies inert and exhausted, there is a wide divergence in the style of landing-net required. The fisherman who wades will not employ the same sort of net the man who casts from a boat finds most convenient; indeed the latter's tool is very awkward for the former's purpose. Furthermore, there is variety in nets also. Just run through the advertising pages of almost any outdoor magazine and note the offerings. If you desire something beside a net, there are pinchers, automatic gaffs, hand grippers and such like galore. Surely the angler's individual desires and whims may be satisfied. I do not expect to mention all nets, that would be impossible, simply give the reader a rough idea of the general style of net that should be used for a given method of fishing, leaving the selecting of the particular make to the fisherman. Then, in concluding, I shall talk briefly of gaffs, for they must have place in every bass angler's outfit. "The reason therefor will hereinafter appear," as the lawyers say.

The net for the man who wades must possess a short handle, and all bass nets should be wide of hoop as compared with those employed in trout fishing. I am not particular as to the shape of the hoop, you may use the square-ender if you think it more convenient; but whatever shape you select be sure that

the hoop is sufficiently strong in the throat and that the net itself is well made. Personally, I like the square bottom net, but after all, that is not a matter of supreme importance. I am totally out of conceit with the net provided with a rubber sling, the memory of several welts and bumps serving to emphasize my dislike. I have never found the sling net where I wanted it, though perhaps it is because I have never happened upon the right make. I desire a good folding hand net, one with a rigid frame, convenient and get-at-able. There are various folding nets, built for trout fishermen, compact enough to go into the ordinary tackle-box, though they take some time to set up. Some of these trout nets are arranged to hook on the coat of the angler, and if the hoop is large enough, the net-bag deep enough, they will do nicely for the bass fisherman who wades. Our fisherman is in the water knee-deep or deeper, a long handle is a decided disadvantage, he must none of it. As to whether or not the net-hoop itself should fold, all depends of course upon the needs of the individual angler; simply, the folding frame is a great convenience in transporting and packing, it must be set up when in use.

A number of automatic gaffs and hand nippers have come into existence, many of which have lived a short life. I remember well a certain automatic gaff, when set with jaws wide open all the angler had to do was to touch the fish, the jaws closed auto-

matically and the fish was fast. I used the contrivance but once upon a bass and I was satisfied. The nippers closed upon my capture, transfixing it from both sides instantly, killing the fish. I never used the gaff to land another black-bass. Recently a new nipper has appeared upon the market which seems to have some points of excellence; it will hold the fish securely, but after all I much doubt that it will take the place of the old regulation landing-net.

The requirements of the boat fisherman are somewhat different from those of the one who wades, the former's net should be possessed of a comparatively long handle, though I can see no need for the 5 foot length sometimes employed. A 30 inch handle is long enough in all conscience, more convenient and I think, on the whole, generally satisfactory. Of course, with the exceedingly long handle it is possible to reach well out from the boat, but I had rather play the fish until I can bring him close up to the boat or do anything with him I please. The fun of the game is in playing the fish and not in netting. I would gladly eliminate the latter if possible. I never slip the landing net under a goodly bass that I do not feel sorry for my prize, he puts up such a gallant fight that the angler possessed of an atom of sporting blood must needs respect him.

The net for the black bass fisherman will depend upon the individual angler. There is no question but that the long handled net is most convenient when

it comes to actually netting the fish, though it must needs be carried in the hand as one makes his way along the bank, and the manner in which a net will cling to brush is enough to provoke a saint. The angler must determine for himself whether or not he will put up with the inconvenience of carrying for the advantage accruing in landing his capture. I have carried the net for two days without hooking a fish worth while, when carrying it was anything but a means of grace; leaving it in camp upon the third day, only to take a large fish which it was next to impossible to land without some aid. The folding net, if not too much folded, has the value of portability; a net which folds too much takes too long to set up, and the chances are that it will not be set up when the rodster needs it worst. I know of one net that is always folded out of the way, and a single motion will bring it to the front ready to greet the weary fish.

So much for the types of nets, now about using them. Whatever net the caster selects there is just one proper way of netting a fish and that is, *head first.* Nearly all the photographs one sees disclose the angler pulling the net over the tail of the fish. All wrong. Let the bass turn and go into the net. Never attempt to draw the net over a bass, especially tail first. Stands to reason that the net will catch on the raised fins of the fish; furthermore, if he has a bit of fight left in him, he can dash out of the net in

spite of the angler's best efforts. The rodster has his capture at a manifest disadvantage when he turns Sir Bass into the net as Nature planned that he should swim. It seems a little thing but like many little things is of tremendous importance. Perhaps it would not be out of place to say once more that the fish should be thoroughly exhausted before an attempt is made to use the net, a modicum of strength remaining to the fish at the last moment is often the angler's undoing. Never be in a hurry to use the landing tools. Why not enjoy the game to the limit, anyway? Unless you are fishing for something to eat simply there is no need for hurry; you certainly are not trying to catch more bass than John Smith, you are too good and true a sportsman for that unethical proceeding, I am sure.

There are times when the bass enthusiast will find himself sans net, sans gaff, sans everything: what then? He will play the fish until it is weary, then play it until exhausted, then play it still more; when certain there is not an atom of strength remaining he will lead his capture close up to the boat, reach down carefully, slip his fingers in its gills and lift it gently into the boat. It can be done. The trick is not at all difficult. Strange as it may seem, once you have your fingers in Sir Bronze-back's gills he loses all power of flopping, or seems to. This is a point to remember when you have a badly hooked fish,

simply hold him by the underside of the gills and disentagle the hook.

I can not write of netting a fish without adding a word regarding that which should follow the net if the angler expects to use the bass for food, and that is, kill it at once. Do not leave the captive to die a lingering death, flopping its life away on the dry floor of a boat, or perishing on a string thrown over the side. A live box is of course a convenience unless the fish is badly hurt by the hook, or the box is over-crowded. Be kind to your fish and the flesh will be much better for food. You would not think of eating strangled animal flesh would you, and a fish dying out of its natural element dies practically the same death that a land animal does when it suffocates. A quick thrust through the back of the neck with a sharp knife will do for a bass quickly and mercifully. Let the fish bleed; you will find the flesh more firm and sweet when placed in the pan. Kill him quickly unless you are going to liberate him; if so do it at once, handling the body only as much as you must, and *only with thoroughly wet hands.*

Some wise guy has said that it is the unexpected which always happens. Now I do not know what happened to him that he said it, but if a bass angler I can imagine—he hooked a big pike. Always the bass caster runs the chance of hooking one of those fresh water wolves and he should have all his plans of battle drawn up beforehand. When you purchase

a landing net, buy one with a separate head and a gaff hook that fits the net handle and then see to it that that hook is always in your tackle-box, then when that "unexpected" big pike comes along, your companion can quickly disengage the net-head and substitute the convenient gaff. Always, then, the angler has a convenient and dependable gaff as well as a landing net with him. That "unexpected" pike deserves a bit of attention for no bass fan is willing to have a ten pound pike escape. A pistol is a convenient tool, lacking which a good thick club can be made to serve right well; a single whack between the wicked eyes will effectually quiet him so that he can be lifted into the boat, where his spine should be quickly severed with a knife-blade thrust. The rodster should be certain that the fish is thoroughly wearied before he strikes with the club, lest a disastrous and grave thing happens to him, he strikes the line just in front of the fish's nose.

As an illustration of the "unexpected pike" allow me to narrate a personal experience. I was shore casting on a certain noted Wisconsin river, all by my lonesome. Three nice bass had come to my net and I was about returning to camp, when a whim possessed me to make "just one more cast" in the direction of a weed-bed some 30 yards distant. Now, just because I payed a little attention to the cast it was a perfect one, and a monstrous pike took my lure, a "Chippewa" underwater. What a fight it

was! Time and again that monster had all but a few yards stripped from my reel and I was almost praying that he might break loose and escape, so save my rod. He was well hooked. A number of times I had him reeled up to within striking distance but always he found sufficient strength for another run. Just as I had about despaired of ever conquering he gave up, though I spent another ten minutes making him swim after he wanted to rest. Finally I brought him to my feet—I was out in the water waist-deep, by the way—slipped my fingers into his gills, my fingers being cruelly lacerated by his awful teeth, and dragged him inconsequentially on shore. Exhausted, I sat down and admired. That night three of our neighbors, as well as ourselves, dined upon baked pike, a no mean dish by the way. Landing of fish is not wholly a matter of tools.

CHAPTER III

FISHING A WADEABLE STREAM

No water is quite so rare, especially in the North, as a wadeable bass stream; yet it can be found, often in unexpected localities. To illustrate without being too particular: A few years ago I lived near a little, unimportant Wisconsin stream, too large to be called a creek and too small to be termed a river, though it was so denominated on many maps. In early days the stream was a somewhat noted trout water, but through clearing of the land and extensive agricultural operations, the temperature of the water was raised to such an extent as to make it untenable for the aristocratic lover of cold water. As a result the small boy fished its quiet pools for "shiners," beyond which its ichthyic possibilities were unexplored. It remained for me to discover that small mouth bass had made their way into the stream and were gradually working up to its source. And why not bass? That river, like many another, emptied into a lake well stocked with the bronze-back warriors, and it was to be expected, character of the water permitting, that they would habitat themselves in all in-flowing streams. I kept the secret close for

three years and experimented with short rod and artificial lures, the results of which are largely set down in this chapter. Be it said, however, that river is the only stream I have found in Northern United States offering ideal conditions for wading, though I have no doubt that it could be duplicated in many localities. (See note at close of chapter.) The findings of other anglers may not agree with mine, for as I have often pointed out, fishing conditions are not the same upon any two streams.

I do not know why some anglers seem to think that a boat is essential to bass fishing with the short rod and artificial lures. Again and again I have proven that bass can be taken successfully from the banks of rivers and lakes, though I am free to confess that boat-fishing is easier and generally more fruitful. However, it remains for me to say that lure casting along a wadeable stream is the very poetry of sport with the short rod. In fishing a shallow stream one can not fail of being impressed with his environment. As an Irish friend of mine has rather wittily put it, "There is more environment to a river than to a lake." You wade along, the wooded banks or broad fields forever passing to the rear, but never gone. Every bend of the stream discloses new vistas, ever changing, each more surpassingly beautiful than the last; even as they offer untried pools, which may shelter the dreamed of monster or present problems the solving of which

will require all the skill of trained arm and eye. If the reader is fortunate enough to have the acquaintanceship of such a stream, let me urge him not to resort to the fly rod to the exclusion of the short caster. I am a user of the light rod myself, but I am only beginning to appreciate the possibilities of the short rod upon wadeable bass streams, even as I am beginning to understand that more streams are wadeable than I have heretofore imagined. True, many rivers possess deep pools, rods of slack water above dams or natural obstructions where wading is out of the question; but the rodster can walk around them upon the bank, casting a speculative lure here and there beneath the fringing trees as he makes his way along, until he reaches the shallows below. Even the expert rodster can not become so enamored with his tackle and the game he is playing as to forget for a single instant his surroundings.

As to special equipment required little need be said. Obviously the lures must be carried in some convenient tackle-box, of which there are few upon the market as yet, for the manufacturers must cater to the multitude who fish from boats. The box must be small so as to be out of the day, and provided with a shoulder-strap; though the belt-case is still more convenient, out of the way and easily reached. Personally I had rather carry a large creel; provided with patent harness it can be pushed well around upon the back and out of the way, placing

my extra lures, never over three or four, in that, each in its individual tin box. Still, for the man who desires plenty of lures and other tackle, I strongly recommend the shoulder-strap-case, or better yet, the belt-box.

Underwater lures the shore caster will not need, the surface or surface-underwater being far and away the best for this sort of work. The landing net should be of the folding variety, or such as are used in trout stream fishing, perhaps a wee bit larger in the hoop. The angler should secure the most convenient net with which he is acquainted. (As was emphasized in Chapter II, I have a grudge against the rubber sling, it likes too well to catch upon a limb and hold back until in an unwary moment the angler exposes some vulnerable part of his anatomy, then—"whang!" he gets it.) Of course the rod will be the angler's favorite caster, and the reel that particular pet winch, in the angler's estimation, second to none. Regarding these matters I have nothing to say here. The rodster will need waders of some sort unless he enjoys swimming, in which case he will have ample opportunity to gratify his desires, for even an apparently shallow bass stream will disclose unlooked for depths now and then. If the reader, as I, wear waders, he will be nervously anxious lest he step into some hole too deep for them, and end his anxiety by doing so. Upon the whole I think he will avoid many disappointments, anguish of soul,

and perhaps profanity, by wearing woolen underclothes and going in all over when first he sets out. But this is not primarily a chapter upon tackle and outfit, rather it is a discussion of how to use that with which the reader is already familiar in a little known sport.

While in fly fishing it is always the part of wisdom to fish against the current wherever possible, in casting artificial lures from the middle of a river the practice is frought with extreme danger. Casting up-stream, a back-lash appears, without rhyme or reason, and what is the result? The angler waits to untangle the knotted line before he attempts to reel in; instantly that floating lure is between his legs or creeping off under the down-reaching roots of some multi-footed pine stump. There is a special legion of devils waiting to possess the harmless floating lure once the angler exposes it upon the surface of a river with even a moderate current. Perhaps the reader thinks he is acquainted with all the perversities of a lure, but let me tell you that unless you have experimented with mid-stream casting in knee-and-a-half-deep water, you have never even imagined what a lure can do. The chances are, if it creeps off into some eddy and tangles up in surface-sweeping branches or fastens upon some variety of immovable snag, the caster will discover that the water beneath is over his head. Better follow the foam. Unquestionably the hooking efficiency of any given lure is

greater when cast against the current, provided always that the angler is in a position to strike at the first intimation of a rise. I have experimented at length, both when wading and when breasting the current in a boat, and speak from long experience when I say that more bass will be taken when the casts are made right and left, quartering against the current. It is possible to simulate the upstream cast, working right and left, even when following the foam.

Wherever drift has accumulated, an undermined stump offers refuge, a sunken log makes the water curl, or a pole six inches in diameter lies half buried in the silt, there look for a bass. Each season I am surprised over again by discovering perdu fish where apparently there was not sufficient covering to conceal a three inch minnow. How they accomplish it is beyond me. Recently I was fishing shallow water, it actually was not over eight inches deep. Approaching a submerged pole, six inches or so in diameter, I drew my lure along its upper side with little expectation of a strike; but, and I must emphasize the point, I never pass any snag, no matter how small, without testing its "fishableness." Imagine my surprise, then, when a two pound small-mouth came from somewhere beneath or along that snag and took my lure with a viciousness to delight the heart of any battle-loving angler. Mind you, the whole length of that pole was in plain sight and I

could not discover a hiding place large enough to conceal a full-grown fish. After the battle, when the bass was safely creeled, I examined the sunken snag with interest and discovered a crook in the pole had caused an eddy near the shore end that had mined out a hole eight or ten inches deep in the silt; in that I think the bass lay in wait for its prey. I say "I think," for of course I do not know.

It seems almost superfluous to add that care must be exercised in casting over snaggy waters, not only because the hook may be fouled in retrieving, but because if the rodster hooks a fish the latter will be quick to seize the advantage offered by the proximity of such refuges. I know of no variety of angling where casting skill is of greater worth, accuracy and distance both being valuable assets. The caster does not wade where the bass are but where they are not, casting into their favorite lurking places. Obviously, in order to achieve a success worth while, the angler must be able to place the lure where it should go, not now and then, but nine times out of ten, say. Here, as the copy-books used cheerfully to assert, "Practice makes perfect." You will find casting in thigh-deep water something of a problem, especially if standing in a swift current. You will find yourself forgetting a great deal learned regarding "overhand," "underhand," and other varieties of casts, improvising to meet the exigencies of a given problem. Whatever the angler does or does not do,

never for a single moment should he lose control of his lure. He should always keep a taut line. When casting in-shore or against snags, the instant the lure strikes the water, the rodster should begin to reel, tip of rod pointed directly at the lure; then should a bass rise, he is in the proper position to strike, by swinging the tip of the rod sharply to left or right—always against the current. But it is woefully hard to give plain and adequate instructions on paper, so many unknown elements may enter into the problem of any given cast. After all, the only worth while guide is that high salaried teacher, Madam Experience.

If your wadeable stream sweeps through meadow-lands, arching grass leaning out over the moving water, cast close in—if the grass is not too heavy—through it: for back under the shielding grass, the current has mined a hole in the soft bank, broader and deeper than you would imagine. Such pools are sure to be found at a bend of the stream, on the side followed by the current. As I said before, it would be better, from the view-point of hooking simply, to fish such places from below, but for the reasons adduced I fish from above; though once in a while, when an especially likely looking spot appears, I go around and fish from below. This is the point I would emphasize here, the angler should fish every foot of the overhanging bank thoroughly.

Often an undermined tree leans out over the

water, its trailing branches sweeping the rippling surface. I have a mental picture of a basswood lying low over the water, its broad, heart-shaped leaves, many of which was submerged, offering shelter to foraying small-mouth. Indeed, so much foliage was submerged that it deflected the current to a certain extent, forming a little whirlpool at the base of the trunk close in shore. The water was five or six feet deep. An angler who possessed sufficient temerity, plus skill, to let a lure down under those menacing branches was sure of a strike, though it was an even break as to whether or not he would creel his fish. Under such conditions the rodster should seek to coax the fish out into the open, resorting to hazardous methods only when all sane expedients fail. To continue to write of the lurking places of bass along a wadeable stream would be a pleasure, but already this chapter is stretching out to unusual lengths and I must reserve at least one paragraph for a few words of advice regarding playing and netting the fish, supplementary to the chapter upon that subject. Be it said, however, ere we leave the matter of hooking fish, the stream angler must be possessed of considerable initiative, originality, and yes, imagination.

To attempt to say just what methods should be employed in playing a fish would be presumptuous, for there are unique problems to be solved in every ichythic battle; no two struggles worth the name are exactly alike, though there are certain suggestions

which may not be out of place regarding the variety of angling with which we have to do. Suppose the rodster had hooked a fish at the edge of the basswood hazard mentioned above—there would be just one thing for him to do, keep the fish from fouling in the branches. The bass would attempt to dive under, but a taut line—the rodster should not give an inch e'en though the line break—will serve to swing the fish out, the force of the current aiding, down into safe water below. Perhaps the bass will dash up-stream, if so the fisherman backs up, remembering that a taut line must be maintained and the tip of the rod pointed in the direction of the hooked fish. Should the bass leap, and if he is a bass worthy the name, he will, the caster need not worry, his straining line will "pull him down." That is all I have to say here. Play every capture until completely exhausted, then net him gently, and kill him at once mercifully.

Note: Since the foregoing chapter was written I have experimented with a number of small streams, for the most part so small that no one fished them, and the results have been truly surprising. In a thickly settled farming community I fished half a mile of shallow water, not over knee-deep, except in holes under the bank, taking half a dozen as fine small-mouth as were ever won from the upper reaches of the lordly Mississippi. I am coming to believe that in the Middle West there are scores of small-mouth streams awaiting some ichthyic Columbus.

CHAPTER IV

FISHING A RIVER FROM A BOAT

That there are many varieties of bass fishing every devotee of the short rod and multiplying reel knows right well. Sometimes I find myself thinking that fishing from the shore—to be described in a following chapter—is the most enjoyable; then, when I feel the snarling current gnawing at my waders, I think wading is far and away the most enjoyable. The truth of the matter is, there is no *best* method; all are good. In this chapter I am to talk of that time-worn, though never out-worn method, floating with the current.

It is exceedingly difficult to imagine anything more satisfactory from the view-point of the nature lover, or successful from that of the angler. Always the scene changes, every bend of the river disclosing new beauties and wonders to exclaim over; even a perfectly familiar stream, whose banks an angler has tramped for years, becomes surpassingly lovely when viewed from the coigne of an open boat. The method appeals to the rodster because every cast is into undisturbed new water; if he wills it so, every bend, snag and leaning tree offering uncaught fish.

The ichythic possibilities of five miles of measurably swift bass water are almost beyond the power of pen to describe. Of course the successful fisherman will be possessed of "fish sense," know the habits and lurking places of the bass he seeks, without which the best tackle, boat, skill with rod, and populous water, will not avail. In this chapter it is my purpose to offer a few hints regarding how to fish from a boat, though I hope never to lose sight of the aesthetical, for that is as worth while as the piscatorial.

It may be possible to "paddle your own canoe" and cast as you make your way along, but the average angler, so doing, will miss some of the best fishing, and the chances are that when he hooks the always dreamed-of "big one," he will experience trouble with his boat, his tackle, lose the monster, and perhaps take an involuntary bath. While I am free to admit that a companion is not always an unmixed blessing, I do not well see how he can be dispensed with when riding the current. "Guide?" No, never! A fishing companion is by all odds the better. Two fishermen can cast "turn and turn about," which adds gentle rivalry to the sport. There should be mutual understanding that the man at the paddle is to hold his peace, no matter what the temptation to advise and instruct. Naturally the man who runs the boat will think that he could cast to better advantage, and play the hooked fish more

expertly; let him think so but keep his thoughts to himself. Such an understanding will obviate all chances for friction. It is as useless to give an angler advice as it is to waste it upon a lover: both will be angered. What the Latins used to say of the lover, *"Omnis amans, amens"* ("Every lover is demented), applies with equal felicity to the modern follower of Izaak Walton.

The man paddling should sit in the stern, the man with the rod well forward; thus the boat will maintain a level keel, and the caster, if at all skillful, need not worry about the back-cast. Such an arrangement also has the advantage of placing the rodster "first at the fish." The boatman should bend his energies to put the man in the bow within easy casting distance of every snag, pool, and likely looking spot. Note I said "easy casting distance": the rodster should never attempt overly long casts, or run the chance of losing control of his lure. Unless you are perfectly familiar with the water, a 40 foot cast is long enough in all conscience, for a dangerous snag may lurk just beneath the most alluring and innocent appearing surface. Remember, too, that the caster is stealing along almost noiselessly, the dip of his paddle creating practically no disturbance. If the stream is not too wide, keep in the middle casting right and left, as the current seems to dictate, remembering that ordinarily the best water will be

on the current side. The rodster always casts towards weeds and obstructions.

I have been talking of down-stream fishing as though there was no possibility of fishing against the current. It is practicable to breast the current if not too swift, but the boat will make more noise and the boatman would have to be supplied with oars in order to make much headway. Of course this would not apply to many a sluggish river, but I am speaking of those Middle West streams which "tumble down hill," where the bass are not overly large as a rule, but gamy to a degree. While I think the rodster is in a better position to hook his bass, casting against the current, most decidedly he is in the poorest position to retrieve his lure. Should he back-lash, or for any reason hesitate for a few seconds, the current will have in the meantime thrown his lure up against a snag somewhere. If the angler has considerable time at his disposal, it would not be a bad idea to work up-stream as far as he cares to go, fishing carefully, then float down with the current; he will find that he can cover a given amount of water in one-third the time, or less, when going with the river. However, I must add that he will fish the water more thoroughly going up; taking more fish. In my experience, at least, I have taken two bass on the up journey to one when floating with the current. But taking the matter by and large it is just as well for the rodster to ship his boat to some up-stream point

and let the current which turns the mill wheels do the work; that advice in spite of the confession that I have taken two to one bass working up-stream. It is hard work to forge against the current. When going down-stream even the most expert rodster can not possibly touch all the likely holes, the current whips him by so quickly; nor will he be in a position to cast into the best spots unless intimately acquainted with the water, so that he knows from former experiences when to "hold his fire" and when to "shoot."

It is needless to discuss tackle here; the reader is invited to turn back to the first section of this volume for the writer's opinions regarding that important matter. I take it for granted that the angler uses a 5 foot or 5 foot 6 rod, than which there is no better caster for this variety of fishing. The reel is the angler's favorite quadruple multiplier, nothing slower than the quadruple need be fastened to the rod, of the particular vintage he loves—free-spool, self-winder, self-thumber, or just a plain orthodox winch. I have so thoroughly discussed the matter in the chapter upon the subject that there is no need for more words here. The lure will of course be the one found most availing in the locality. There are times when the underwater is the thing, though such a lure must be manipulated with care upon a small, snaggy stream; upon the whole the surface-underwater will prove the most convenient,

its floating properties being a decided advantage in case of reel trouble. Even a floating lure will manage to find its way against many a snag. Lest the reader neglect to take an underwater with him, let me urge him here always to carry three or four standard lures of that type in his tackle-box. You will find many a deep hole and eddy where success will depend upon "going down after 'em," and you will desire to go. A deep water, if well shaded, will shelter some *Field and Stream* prize winners. Cast into the shade. Keep the boat in the shallows and fish the deeps. Just a word of warning regarding the overhanging trees: look out for them, they will catch the lures on the back-cast if given half a chance, and, if casting too close to the shore, they will get the lure on that side now and then. It is somewhat serious to hook up with a stationary object when traveling 10 or 15 miles an hour.

Every snag—little or big, simple or involved—should be approached with stealth and fished out with care. Unless the angler is acquainted with the particular snag and knows its secrets, he should fish the water end first, and work gradually in shore. Always take ample time. The angler has all the time there is. "Rome was not built in a day," remember. Three casts should be sufficient to fish out the average snag unless the bass are lying deep, in which case the rodster will be compelled to "go down after them" with some variety of underwater, a

hazardous thing as he knows or will discover to his sorrow. When the boat swings around a bend and the rodster sees a good snag before him, he will edge the boat into the opposite shore; where the stream is not too wide the boatman will hold it with a firm paddle thrust into the bottom, or by clinging to over-hanging branches, while the angler fishes out the water. Always he will cast slightly above the snag, waiting a second or two, depending upon the speed of the current, for the lure to swing down where he wants it before beginning to reel. He must exercise extreme care or he will snag. He may not sleep on the job, or cast and admire Nature at the same time. Any variety of casting is not the sport of a lazy man, let critics say what they choose about the matter.

On a hot midsummer day a low-hanging tree, branches trailing the water, will be sure to shelter one or more goodly fish. I remember some seasons ago taking what my companion dubbed "a whole family of bass" from such a shelter early one August morning: six o'clock, to be exact; two, unusually large for the stream and four medium sized. The mere fact that I deem it worthy of mention here proves that it was a somewhat unusual occurrence. In such places, unless the fish are really feeding in earnest, the rodster will find underwater lures the most successful. Cast well above and let the lure travel down beneath the branches, praying the while

that none hang deep in the water, lest he come to grief. A snag deep down in such a place, if the river be swift, is really a serious matter. It is easier than the unitiated imagine to court a spill. Listen, you will find it exceedingly difficult to disengage a lure fast on a swaying branch four feet beneath the surface; a solid snag is a less serious problem. Nevertheless a true angler will not allow the fear of snags to drive him by a low-hanging tree, rather he will risk precious tackle in an adventurous cast.

The sleeping log is always worth investigating. Usually it has been brought down by some freshet and left with one end embedded in the silt, the other lying out in the water, diagonally to the current. The chances are that somewhere along its length the current has mined out a hole which can be located by the welling water upon the lower side. That is the place to cast first, then if no response is received, fish out the whole log, taking time to do it thoroughly. In such a location the angler must be ready to swing his rod sharply to right or left, lest the bass get under the log, its tactics every time. Fight the fish with the spring of the rod, backed up with the ever ready reel. The caster must remember to pay closest attention to the game from start to finish or he will be beaten. The black bass is not only a great fighter, he is also an ichthyic strategist beyond compare.

I have already mentioned the eddy, and it is a

good place for deep fishing unless the stream is infested with pickerel, in which case it is apt to be inhabited with that unsavory gentleman. The pickerel is all right in his place, but when we are casting for bass we desire none of him. The eddy at the bend or elbow of a stream will give an opportunity for long casts and a chance to try out underwater lures without fear of snags. I have found, when fishing with underwater lures of any sort, simple trolling spoon or involved minnow type, that I have taken more fish reeling with the current. I think the reason is, that when drawing the lure against the current it travels too slow to attract the average bass. Perhaps I am wrong in my theory, but I am not wrong in my fact, my notes for twenty years with bass substantiating the assertion. In the matter of eddy fishing I can only reiterate what I have said regarding casting elsewhere, make haste slowly, take planty of time to fish out the water. Let no likely pool or hint of pool pass to the rear unfished. The patient and slow fisherman wins out where the light and dilettante angler fails. Remember the fable of the hare and tortoise.

It is undoubtedly true that bass prefer a diet of crustaceans, but in the average river they are not adverse to an occasional minnow or two, perhaps as a sort of dessert. The live bait fisherman has long known that there is no better bait than a shiner minnow. Where a creek enters the main stream, the

angler will find a deep hole, usually below the creek's mouth; there cast, early in the morning and again late in the afternoon, according to the feeding habits in that particular water. Just why minnows make their way down to the mouths of such brooks is not clear, but they do, many of them becoming food for hungry bass and pickerel. Now I have learned, when casting, to expect one or more fish from those pools and seldom am I disappointed. After the rodster has had some experience in stream fishing from an open boat, he will come to cast where the fish lie, well nigh instinctively. The true angler almost "feels" the proximity of a bronze-back warrior. My only hope is that the foregoing remarks may aid the reader to become acquainted with this most fascinating of ichthyic sports, fishing from a boat where the tide bears you along.

Remains but a few words regarding playing and netting the capture. Elsewhere in this volume there is a chapter upon the subject together with some remarks upon landing tools; this, then, is only supplementary to what was said there. Ordinarily the angler will experience little trouble in hooking the fish, the current and the fish itself will attend to that part of it; but he may find it somewhat difficult to play his capture in the circumscribed area, where all aids and advantages are upon the side of the bass. If the rodster lay a long line, and the water is "snaggy," as it is in nine-tenths of the Middle West

bass rivers, the current will sweep the bass down where the problem will be raised to the n-th place. The overhanging trees, the heap of drift-wood, the down-reaching roots of an undermined pine stump, all offer sure and safe refuge for the bass.

Did I not warn the reader at the very beginning of this chapter not to try for distance? It is extremely problematical whether or not the caster can successfully handle more than forty feet of line on the average hazardous river, a greater amount is going to multiply his troubles in playing and netting. Casting from free water to snaggy is a great aid, for if the angler is quick he can pull his capture away from the dangerous ground by sheer strength of rod and line. A good rod and line will stand the abuse, therefore the caster should never employ any but the best. Often the boat-fisherman can drop with the current below the fish's snaggy lair and so play him in free water. Eternal vigilance is alone the price of victory. Never attempt to net any fish until it is thoroughly and completely exhausted, much less the resourceful bronze-back, a fish that possesses more unexpected reserve strength than even the rainbow trout. As to when the moment of exhaustion arrives will depend upon the particular fish's staying powers and the angler's resourcefulness and stick-to-itiveness. Always net the bass head-foremost. There is little need for saying more upon this subject, we discussed it quite at length in a former chapter; anyway, no two battles are alike and no man may say just

what another should do under any given circumstance Advice given upon such topics as the one discussed in this paragraph must be more or less hypothetical.

The great fascination of this variety of casting is the ever changing panorama of flood and field and wood, while the chance that the next bend, snag or pool may contain that mythical "big one," adds zest and piquancy. The rodster holds his breath as the boat sweeps around a bend. He finds his reel-hand trembling with excitement and expectancy, then a beautiful vista unfolds below, and forthwith he forgets all about rod and reel and fish. Who could think only of the game when voyaging through a veritable fairyland? Indeed and always, "It is not all of fishing to fish," nor indeed, as for that, is it all of living to exist. Aside from the surroundings, it is the woo of the unexpected which leads the angler on and on. Never is he satisfied with the last fish, perhaps the next bend will produce a larger. "Quien sabe?" So the boat fisherman journeys, all agog with expectancy, always open-eyed and open-eared to his beautiful surroundings. Reader: if you have not tested the possibilities of this variety of casting—piscatorial, æsthetical and, yes, theological—there is a blank page in your book of angling experiences. After all what a day on the bosom of the flood will mean to you will depend upon what you yourself are. Go, then, and may the blessing of the Red Gods go with ye.

CHAPTER V

SHORE CASTING

I am enamoured of bass angling, all angling. Sometimes I find myself thinking that boat casting is the most enjoyable, that is when I am casting from a boat; again I find myself as firmly believing that wading is the most attractive method, that is, of course, when I am splashing about in hip-boots; and again there are moments when I fondly insist that trolling is far and away the contemplative angler's recreation, needless to add that is when I am stealing about the lake in the shouding mists of early dawn, my whirling spoon trailing far behind the canoe. Actually, there is no best, or most enjoyable method, all are good; to the right sort of an individual, soul-ravishing. No, that is not hyperbole. The fact of the matter is, there are times when one method is the successful method, and still other times when something radically different is the one that succeeds. By the same token, waters differ, and neither is the angler always in the same mood, for the disciple of Izaak Walton is a moody individual, as moody as the black bass. To me the great attractivity of casting is its many methods, a method for any water, or

THE HAPPY SHORE CASTER

mood, mood of fish or angler. In this chapter I am to converse upon shore-casting.

Shore-casting is pre-eminently a river sport. Seldom can it be indulged in upon a lake. In order to cast successfully from the shore the rodster must have deep water within reach and an appreciable amount of room for the back-cast. However, it is surprising how the experienced caster will manage to get a lure out where Nature provides but little back room. Casts will be extemporized on the spur of the moment, to the astonishment of the angler himself, but more of that matter further along. The great attractivity of shore-casting is its many difficulties, problems and fish—yes, *fish*. The man who understands the habits of bass and knows how to use his tackle need never fear a fishless creel. Even the "fished-out" stream will yield a bass or two.

Some seasons ago I was spending my vacation in a Middle West town, a little village built upon the banks of a small stream with ichthyic memories. The fishing, like the business of the town, was almost wholly reminiscent. The patriarchs would button-hole me at every opportunity and begin: "Why, boy, twenty-seven years ago come next August, I—." I soon learned to fear those old men as the wedding guest feared the ancient mariner. While the sleepy village had attractions for jaded nerves, the patriarch's interminable stories drove me to solitary angling in self defense. At first I fished perfunctorily,

casting simply to kill time, while the people who beheld me smiled commiseratingly. But one day, a mighty swirl below an up-turned stump sent my heart into my throat, and as a result I set myself assiduously to the work. I mastered the problem. Day after day I wandered up and down the banks of the little stream, casting into every likely looking hole. I did not take a fish at every cast, far from it, three or four a day only. But such fish! Evidently the bass had been putting on avoirdupois ever since the last patriarch had surrendered his cane pole and pork rind bait, putting on avoirdupois while waiting for a man of faith and leisure, provided with modern plugs. I often wonder about that river, if any one fishes it now; if so, what success they have. Well, this is the point: there is a field for the shore caster in unexpected quarters. Perhaps Fate has something up her sleeve for you.

Nothing need be said about special tackle for this variety of angling; the regular rod and reel, your favorites, will prove all that can be desired. The lures also need no comment, though I would urge the caster to specialize in surface and surface-underwater types, not forgetting one or two good underwaters for the occasional deep hole. Of course all will depend upon the particular river. A broad and deep stream will admit of almost any lure, while the shallow and narrow "creeks" will preclude all but floaters. Local conditions will govern the character

and color of the lure as I have pointed out again and again in this work. The true caster will not hesitate to try the new shapes and colors, ofttimes the new wrinkle will surprise some old and wary bass into rising. If you can induce a bass to manifest enough curiosity to investigate, the game is up to you.

The bank fisherman must be able to employ every known cast, "over-hand," "under-hand," "side-swipe"—and then some. There is no doubt but that the "over-hand" is the best and most accurate, but when the angler is standing under trees with low hanging branches, the "over-head" or "over-hand" is out of the question. Under such conditions the much maligned "side-swipe" is the thing. Indeed, as I have elsewhere asserted, the rodster will learn to start a cast at his very feet with a sharp upward jerk, which will send the lure out upon the river to a considerable distance. (See Chapter I.) Naturally such a cast does not allow of much control, but this is not tournament show work, this is fishing, and such a cast will result in rises. To play a fish, standing on a bank with rod pointing straight down, everything in reverse order almost, requires just as much skill as when sitting in a comfortable boat. The angler will find the low branches an ever present menace, always reaching out to his undoing. The bank-caster will soon learn to sacrifice distance to safety, to employ all his skill all the time.

The same trees that offer good fishing to the

wader and boat caster are also likely places for the shorecaster. I think I am safe in saying that never are the "sweepers" so dangerous and difficult of access as when approached from the shore side. The force which made of the tree a sweeper sees to it that down underneath the trailing branches a deep hole has been mined, even on a small stream far deeper than the uninitiated imagines. Shade, depth, roots, and perhaps lodged drift, what better home could a bronze-back ask? Those very elements which make the location ideal from the fish's viewpoint, render it exceedingly hazardous for the angler. You may always set it down as an ichthyic axiom, the greater the hazard the greater the chances for a fish. Rather, the better the chances for a rise; success in such environment is always problematical. The cast should be made from well above if possible, trusting the current to swing the lure down under the tree. If the river be swift of current, attach a heavy underwater of some striking color, having, of course, looked the pool over previously for snags and obstructions. If the cast is made from a position too near the down-tree, the lure will strike beyond its top, swing around and tangle as sure as Fate. Then, too, as a rule bass lie close in-shore, at the roots of the tree. Such a pool is more easily fished from a boat, but as pointed out in the chapter on that subject, too often the angler is carried by the best locations. One advantage the

shore fisherman has is leisure, opportunity to study and fish each individual hole. As in all angling, I advise the reader not to attempt to cover too much ground.

Kipling's "Raw, right-angled log jam," the piled up refuse of many a spring-time flood, offers possibilities. (I think I put that well, "offers possibilities!") To fish out such a spot demands casting room, patience and skill. There is no question of up or down stream here, it must be down. The cast should be well above so that the lure will have time to settle or be drawn into the water before the current sweeps it down against the debris. The angler must be on the job. He can not admire Nature while casting. The lure must be under absolute control or it will be thrust hard and fast against some underwater log or projecting timber. Always the bass are in such piled up debris, loving the shady depths as well as the lazy feeding offered by the current. If the fish do not respond to the underwater enticement, fish out every foot of the surface reachable with some dependable surface lure, like the "Coaxer" for instance. Do not be in a hurry. Sit down and rest between whiles. Do not give up. The secret of success in angling is always to believe that there is a fish under every snag, in every pool.

In other chapters I have already mentioned the undermined stump, those projecting roots always seem to have a special attraction for the bass. A

stump, held erect by the roots still remaining in the soil but with one-half or two-thirds of the tentacles projecting out and down into the water, is sure to shelter a fish and therefore should not be passed carelessly by the rodster who tramps the shore, e'en though casting is perilous to tackle. The only way to save tackle is to induce the fish to come out of his lair. If the angler allows the lure to adventure down amid the roots and the fish takes it, it is a perfectly safe gamble that the daring angler will mourn a lost fish, if he is not called upon to assist at the obsequies of some favorite plug. But the very peril increases the attractiveness of the game. "Nothing ventured, nothing had," is a good slogan for the shorecaster.

Sometimes when following down a river the rodster will come to a high, steep bank, the purling water some twenty or thirty sheer feet below him. Usually the current washes the foot of such a bluff, while the far bank is low and marshy, the reason therefor being not far to seek. Naturally the deep water should be fished from the other side, casting over, but the fisherman is not on the far side and has no means of crossing. What shall he do? Shall he pass the spot un-fished, waiting for another day when he shall be upon the other side of the river? A good plan perhaps, but if the steep bank is clear of trees and brush, as is often the case, I should say, cast. "What, from the top?" Yes, "from the top!" Such

a procedure may produce thrills, it is true, but what are you angling for any way? Just imagine hooking a three pound bass thirty feet below you with no means of getting down to him, success depending entirely upon your ability to lead the broncho of the waters to some point where the bank is lower, and he can be reached with the net.

Which leads me to pause just long enough to pay tribute to the lure of the impossible. I always take a chance. No matter how hazardous the place appears, if it looks "fishy" to me, I cast. Understand, however, I always take time to figure out the tactics to be employed in case I hook a fish before I cast, then, murmuring, "Abracadabra," I send the lure hurtling into the most perilous spots. I sometimes lose out, but I can say without a smack of conceit, more often I win. I attribute half my success in angling to my dare-deviltry, fishing the pool the other fellows pass by. You can if you will, reader, fishing for ordinary fish, in ordinary water, on an ordinary summer day, so contrive that your fishing will produce thrills comparable to those enjoyed by the tarpon enthusiast. What I say unto one, I say unto all, take a chance.

In casting along a small stream the angler will depend upon the far bank for the major portion of his creel. I have already told of fishing the likely places, which if at his feet will be "touched up," merely, waiting for a chance to cross and fish them

out from the far side. A stream 50 to 100 feet wide will best be fished across-water. All that has been said about lurking places holds true whether fishing "in" or "out," of course. To fish the far bank the rodster must have sufficient room for the back-cast and the overhead-swing. Casting above obstructions and waiting for the lure to swing down into fishy territory, watching the while for out-reaching snags. The unacquainted can not realize how fascinating is the sport, accuracy and distance playing an important part in the game. As a rule the angler will have greater success fishing in the current when it bathes the distant bank. If the shore permits, let the lure strike against the bank and tumble into the water, a trick the small-mouth will "fall for" every time. If the shore be grassy, the wise rodster will slam the lure close up against the green fringe, the greater the commotion made the better. Often a river pickerel or pike will find the lure attractive, striking vindictively, perhaps to the angler's disgust though pickerel even are good to practice upon. Personally I am not a hater of the pike family, either in the water or pan. If the far bank slopes in a mud flat to the water's edge, it may be possible to toss the plug upon the mud and gently pull it down and into the water without noise or commotion. While a bass is usually attracted by a "splutter-budget" style of casting, there are days along small rivers when quietness seems to appeal more strongly. If the far bank is

clear, toss the lure upon it, wait for things to quiet down, then "hop" it into the water. When casting, keep in the shade, eliminate yourself as much as possible, it is more important than some think. Naturally, upon a river of some width, the rodster can cast into the shade on the far side with good results, but keep out of sight as much as possible.

It is hardly necessary, as it is not expedient to enlarge overly much upon the playing and netting of the fish, so much depends upon local characteristics. I have said my say in the chapter upon the subject, here referring my interested and curious readers to those pages. However, I must insist that the bank-caster study the lay of the land before he sends his lure adventuring out upon the water; after a little experience he can plan an ichthyic battle with a single glance, know absolutely what he is going to do *if the bass does what he thinks it will.* I demand that the printer put those words in italics, full capitals would be none too impressive. It is that one element of chance which forever menaces the rodster with unknown possibilities. Just the same, the mental processes—a Pickwickianism, if you please—of the average bass are about the same. After much experience the shorecaster can generally prognosticate with considerable assurance as to what a bass will do, though he may not do it. Would the fisherman have it otherwise if he could?

I trow not. Even shorecasting without surprises would prove very drab indeed.

Always I have paid tribute to the fish that escapes. Many times I have been compelled to take off my hat to the victorious bass, invariably I think, with fairly good grace. Why should the angler mourn the fish that gets away? May it not be hooked again? At any rate, has not the angler had the thrill of battle? I will grant that at the moment the experience is soul-wrenching, harrowing, but when a few days have mellowed the happening it becomes very satisfactory in retrospect. More than once, many times, indeed, I have seen the record bass of the day or season regain its liberty by a last convulsive flop at the very lip o' the net. A great splashing, a rain of spray, a disappearing shadowy form, and a widening circle of wavelets alone recording the story. Such an experience is good for the angler's soul, I presume; at any rate, if he is wise, he will discover why the accident occurred, and so compel his failures to contribute to his future successes. I have found my failures more helpful than my victories. So here is to the bass that gets away. May he continue to teach us how to angle and so help us overcome his less wily brethren.

While, as I have said, bank-casting is a river method largely, it is possible to fish some lakes, or portions of them. More than once I have climbed

out on down trees and half submerged snags, in order to secure rod room, and standing thus took more than one good mess. I have found small lakes in the North Country, deep from the very shore, where casting could be indulged in with joy and success. For three years I lived near a small lake, long and narrow, with deep water reaching the bank at the lower end, from which I took my quota of small-mouth. At some points the trees leaned out over the water, though a man could creep along under them, flipping his lure twenty or thirty feet out, a method that brought results when bass were feeding. I can well remember one June evening when the fish under those trees were numerous and would rise almost at my feet. I took four bass, losing more than twice as many, but what of that? That lake was within half a mile of a city of 1,500. Near the same town there was another lake, across the middle of which a railway made its way. Needless to say one could cast from the bridge, playing hide and go seek with the trains. While ordinarily I urge the would-be lake fisher to use a boat, the lack of a craft should not deter him from trying his luck.

A final word regarding the attractivity of the sport may not be out of place. To steal along a river bank in the early morning, or when the evening shadows gather, dipping now and then into likely places, while the birds flit in and out of the

green copses, is very entrancing. Even in mid-day the sport can be indulged in, for the dense shadows under the leaning trees always shelter feeding fish in a populous river. I have found the best hours to be those from dawn to eleven o'clock, and again from four or five until dark. Yet it is the environment, the change of scene, the problems presented, the expected fish, and the thrill of the battle, which must always be fought against fearful odds, that makes bank fishing attractive to one skillful enough with short rod and multiplying reel to attempt it. I know of no variety of angling that will so quickly increase the angler's control, for without it shore-casting is an impossibility.

Under no conditions is the leap of the bass more thrilling and beautiful. Opposite the rodster, forty or fifty feet distant, a basswood tree leans out over the water, its broad leaves playing with the current, as a girl loves to dabble her fingers, leaning over the side of a canoe. Back of the basswood stand other trees, rank on rank, until lost in a solid mass of green; or perhaps the leaning tree is alone, reaching away and away beyond are broad cultivated fields. Whatever the background, the picture is complete and satisfying. The angler pauses to take it all in, even to the marsh hawk soaring in the blue overhead, and the blue harebells ringing in the breeze. Then the lure is sent hissing through the air, straight as an arrow from a practised archer's

bow, to a spot some two or three feet above the sweeping branches. With the splash of the lure the reel begins to turn and under goes the red and white submerger. Comes the rise and strike. The battle is joined. The bass fights for the shelter and haven of underwater branches. Foiled by rod and reel, he goes into the air, shaking the bright water from his glistening sides, and is back into his element again tugging away at the restraining line. Once and again comes that wondrous leap, for an instant the curving, burnished bronze body is silhouetted against the green of the sweeping tree, a picture never to be forgotten. Such is the leap of the river bass, and the attractivity of shore-casting.

CHAPTER VI

CASTING AFTER DARK

Perhaps night casting, like Milton's "Paradise Lost," is more admired than indulged in. We all gladly acknowledge Milton's supremacy among poets, but—and so—. That casting artificial lures in Stygian blackness is ultimate sport we all eagerly admit, too eagerly in fact, our zeal smacking of the litterateur's admiration for our greatest poet. In plain English, there are few casters who essay the sport in darkness, and "there's a reason." It shall be my purpose in this chapter to talk about the joys of night fishing, putting its attractiveness in the fore-front, not forgetting to enlarge upon the "how-to" side of the subject, however.

Night casting is beginning where the other fellow leaves off. When the sun kisses the tree tops and the long shadows come stretching and reaching in from the western shore, the night fisher shoves his little bark out upon the stilling water. No matter what the day may have been, how windy or tempestuous, ordinarily the sable hand stills the waves, a great calm settles on lake and shore. The folk-saying, "The wind will go down with the sun,"

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has a basis of fact, which can not be said of all weather apothegms. The sun disappears and the lake becomes glass. Night creeps in from the east. Gradually distant objects grow hazy, then disappear. The world shrinks. The trees along the shore take on a ghostlike character, if only a few rods away, looming tall and specter-like against the twinkling sky. It is difficult to distinguish the shore-line, the water and land blending in the half light in a wonderfully confusing manner. The weed-bed, perfectly familiar in mid-day, assumes a foreign aspect under the influence of Erebus until one is prone to believe that he never saw it before. The stars in the water, exaggerated replicas of those sparkling in the low arch above, adds to the angler's tumult of mind. Imagination runs amuck. Only the very sane or very phlegmatic should indulge in night casting. No, I have not over-drawn the matter one iota.

From the foregoing paragraph it would at once appear that the fisherman must have accurate and intimate knowledge of the water; know the location of every weed-bed, snag and open pool. The rodster must study the water to be cast over with minutest care, marking open pockets along the edge of the weed-field so that it will be impossible to make a mistake after night-fall. He will even thrust a stick or two deep down in the mud a few feet to the left or right of the spot he wishes his

lures to strike. He will be sure that every under-water snag and weed-bed is known. Nothing will be taken for granted. During the day time he will cruise up and down the field, confining himself to a very circumscribed area, studying conformation, currents and cat-tails. After night has fallen there will be little or no temptation to travel a-far, the angler will be perfectly satisfied to cover a restricted territory, casting not too often but well. In no variety of angling is accuracy and *instinctive* control of tackle of greater importance. Again and again the night caster will be compelled to depend upon the sense of feeling. It is that delightful mysteriousness which makes the sport so alluring to the experienced. Let me advise the reader not to attempt the pastime until he has thoroughly mastered the short rod and reel. It is not a sport for the tyro. Never cast after dark in unfamiliar water unless you can contemplate the possibility of a broken rod or snagged lure with equanimity.

Naturally tackle should be of the best, nothing cheap or shoddy from butt-cap to trailing hook. If the would-be night caster possess two rods, as every experienced bass fan should, one light and the other somewhat heavier, let him employ the latter by all means. The added weight and stiffness will not interfere with the casts, and may prove a great asset in case of trouble. Long casts will not be required and should not be indulged in. Here is

the place beyond all question for the self-thumbing reel, for no matter how expert the rodster may be, how sensitive his thumb, he is going to back-lash; we all do, and that will be his consolation. The spooling device is also a valuable auxiliary, for it is exceedingly difficult to spool the line evenly after dark. As between the level-winder and self-thumber for night fishing I would find it hard to choose, both in combination would approach the ideal. I have already emphasized the importance of skill, but allow me to say that only the past master of thumbing should undertake night casting with the regular winch, unless his boat be provided with an electric dynamo and lights. Is that impressive enough? The line should be the larger of the two sizes recommended for casting, G and H, of as conspicuous a color for the water fished as can be procured, white ordinarily. This is more important than it seems. Time and again the angler will desire to know where his line lies, if it be of a color that blends with the water so much the worse for him.

Floating lures and surface-underwaters only, more of the first. It goes without saying that a simon-pure underwater should never be used, and multi-hooked lures avoided as one flees the small-pox. The angler will remove all but the belly treble, if so doing does not destroy the balance of the lure and in weedy water or where snags are

numerous, will substitute a weedless hook. Suppose he does fail to hook every fish that strikes, that is better than hooking every weed that interferes, or anchoring solidly to a log in the blackness just beyond. There is a legion or two of devils inhabiting "the blackness beyond," whose special mission it is to torture the soul of the night fisherman, and lest they have their way with him, he will eschew hooky lures.

Those radio lures are very good for the night caster as they can be seen in the thickest darkness, indeed the darker the night the more visible they are. Every angler is acquainted with them. The plug is coated with some sort of phosphorescent paint that has the property of absorbing and radiating light. Exposed to the sun, or even to the flame of a match for a moment or two, they will glow with a bluish-white, ghostly light for some hours. Whether or not the light attracts the fish is an open question, but it does reveal the location of the lure to the anxious boatman, a matter of even greater importance. There are a number of good lures upon the market designed especially for the night fisherman. I would select those that make quite a splash and commotion if I were purchasing, for the bass finds the commotion-making lure almost irresistible; he strikes at it first, finds out afterwards what it is. His mental processes—asking the pardon of John Burroughs—run on this wise—"There

is something struggling in the water, it is trying to escape me, it must be good to eat, I'll grab it." And like the man who rushes into matrimonial bliss, he is hooked, then repents. I want a little color on my night lures, a sort of red-headed woodpecker effect; or that, what's its name, the lure with the white body and cocked red feathers, the red feathers concealing the up-turned hook, almost weedless. This would be my word to the man selecting lures for night fishing, make your selection with the particular sport in mind and do not skimp. What was your question, Dorothea Ann? "What about that underwater electric light?" Dorothea Ann, Dorothea Ann, do you want to get me into trouble? I refuse to answer.

There are one or two extra things which the night caster's tackle-box should contain, chief of which is a good sized electric flash light, one with a sliding button so that the light may be turned on for any length of time. If the reader acts upon my advice and secures one, let me urge upon him to see that the battery is fresh when he pulls away from the landing. I have scratched matches until that portion of male attire commonly used for the purpose has looked like the back of a negro after a visit by the White Caps. To leave the rod or reel is no less disastrous than to leave the flash light, or have the battery run out. The landing net should be large, though it is not important that the handle

be overly long. A loaded revolver will come in handy should the rodster be unfortunate (?) enough to hook a large pike. A spare line will give a sense of confidence. Accidents happen not only in the best of regulated families, but also in the career of the night fisherman. He is wise who provides for any contingency. By the way, I have a friend who always carries a life preserver, but that is preparedness beyond the imagining of our Theodore; however, boats have been known to tip over in the wild scramble which sometimes occurs incident to the netting of a large bass.

I have already written largely upon the subject of fishing companions, but suffer a word or two in addition. If it is the caster's purpose to move about from spot to spot, or along the edge of weed-beds or shore, a companion is an absolute essential. While I am one of the "go alone" clan, still I value comradship highly. Let the rodster select his night companion as he would a life-partner, with discrimination and care. Not a guide, no, but a companion, like himself in love with the sport for sport's sake, and as intimately acquainted with the water. The loquacious individual should be abhorred as the plague, a mute being preferable. Let Caliban's creative "Quiet" have the mastery. The only sounds those made by Nature's wakeful denizens, and the splashing of feeding fish. There is a silent comradship which is as infinitely superior to talkability as

love is superior to hate. With the ideal companion, possessed of skill, knowledge, and a poet's appreciation, night casting is about as near a piscatorial heaven as anything I know.

Lacking the ideal companion, my advise to the reader is, go alone. "How?" Listen. Seek out some spot, in the day time, of course, where the boat can be anchored in such a position as to make casting in two or three directions a possibility. You may be compelled to search some time before you find such a place, but not so long as you will to find the ideal companion, believe *me*. Quietly take your position about sunset and secure your boat. Do not get in a hurry to cast. Wait. The lone fisherman has all the time there is. Remember the field of your operations is circumscribed and do not cast too much. Watch the day die. Invoke your soul. Wait.

There comes a splash, and a widening circle of wavelets close up to the edge of the weeds and within range. Mortal man could not be expected to withstand that temptation. "Shoot, man, shoot!" Ah, he's on! What did you expect? Play him. Net him. Now wait some more. There are other bass there, of course, but wait for them to manifest their hungry presence. This is "dry-lure" fishing with a vengence. The moments slip unheeded and unregarded by. Night comes on apace. Ah, another splash, this time almost behind. To turn about takes but a second, and the lure strikes with a

resounding splash just where it should. The bass rises instantly, misses, comes again before you can breathe twice, and lo, is on. Another battle. Another victory. A third fish comes to net before the light fades from the western heavens and Night reigns supreme.

No man may tell when Night arrives any more than he can say when Day is born. So gradual, so imperceptible is the change that it takes us all unawares. The lone fisherman suddenly discovers that he can no longer see the marging weeds, that Day has fled; it comes to him with a shock, and he sits up, keenly alive to the situation. From somewhere out on the lake comes the sound of a great splash, for leviathan feeds in the night time. There is a quick, nervous in-take of breath. "O-o-o-o-o-o, e-e-e-e-, suppose *he* gets on!" "Splash!" Right by the boat, too! "Splash!" Probably where the first one 'rose. "Splash!" This time the thud of the glowing lure striking the water. It is a good cast, but the eager rodster has no time to felicitate himself upon his skill, for the fish is hooked.

When will the epic of the fighting bass be written? Who will write it? Good Doctor Henshall has tried his hand, and has given us the story in packed sentences that glow, but—shall I be tried for heresy?—he has failed to do justice to the bronzeback warrior. Now, Reader, roll all the accounts of bass battles you have ever read into one, multiply

it by your own greatest and most notable experience, and you will have a faint idea what fighting a black bass in Stygian night is like. The line rips through the water with an audible sound, though the angler can not see the broken surface. The bass leaps, returning with a splash that sets all the nerves agog, though the circles rushing away to tell the story to the shore are invisible. The angler who does not yield to panic is unusual, even the most blase of rodsters will develop a case of nerves the first night, flashing the electric light in all directions but the right one. To happen to catch the bass in the pencil of light just as he leaps, is comparable to seeing a ship, full rigged, sail across the disk of the round orbed moon just as it rises from its watery bed. But this is an aside.

To feel the rushing fish, the line thrumming as he dashes this way and that in wild frenzy, or leaps into the air with a rain of water, and not be able to see him; to be compelled to guess, from daylight experiences, what he is doing, well may be dubbed "angling that is different." To fight the fish by instinct, reeling in and paying out line when you feel that you must, as the line becomes slack or taut, will try your skill, your nerves and your religion. Night casting *is* "different," all right. The fish, tired, you bring him at last to the boat's side, but the battle is not over by any means, remains the netting. In time you will learn to handle the net and flash with

one hand, the latter grasped in the right with the net handle, while you control the fish with the left. Perhaps, probably, you will be compelled to drop the net and flash before you conquer; well for you if in your excitement you do not drop them where you can not find them when you want them again. The bass netted and safely creeled, you will wipe the beads of sweat from your forehead, surprised to find your whole body in a glow. Such is the battle of the midnight bronze-back.

As to how late the fish will feed, all depends upon the local water, the weather and number of anglers. I have known bass waters where the large-mouth fed throughout the reign of Erebus, but they were much sought by anglers during the day, and had therefore become night-feeders almost exclusively. Nine times out of ten a rodster could take a good basket between the hours of 10 P. M. and 3 A. M. The weather has a great deal to do with fishing, as it has had since the time of Isakk Walton. Night fishing is at its best in July and August, when the "bloom" is on the water and the direct rays of the sun sends the fish deep down for low temperature and shade. "I do not understand what these fish live on," remarks the uninitiated, returning from the lake as the stars begin to peep out, "they are never on the feed." Sly old bass. Ignorant fisherman. The former has changed his habits and the latter must do likewise if he hopes for success.

The coming of the stars marks the beginning of sport on many a so-called "fished out" water.

I am inclined to think, in fact, I am positive that "the dark o' the moon" is the best time of the month in which to resort to night fishing. Bass may be taken on a bright moonlight night, when the fishing is comparatively easy, for the angler can see without the aid of an artificial light, though always the flash should be kept in a convenient and get-at-able place. Even with the aid of a full moon, the untangling of a back-lash may be a serious matter. Upon the other hand, a pitch black night is more apt to present the faithful angler with a record fish. I like to see the stars—stars in the sky and stars in the water—but experience has taught me that the dream bass, the one fish—those so large that it takes two men to tell about them—feed on the blackest nights, feed where the quiet night fisherman may reach them with a cast lure, an impossibility in broad day. If you doubt the assertion that big fish feed after night-fall, simply push out on your favorite lake about 10 or 11 o'clock and sit perfectly still. If you do not think that some Titan is throwing logs into the water, I will miss my guess. That "there are bigger fish in the lake than have ever been caught" is something more than a time-worn aphorism.

I have been writing on lake fishing, for night casting is peculiarly a lake sport, though I presume

on a broad, sluggish river it might be resorted to with success. Unfortunately I have never had the high privilege of trying out my night theories on such water. I have night fished with live bait more or less, but can not now remember of any great successes on small streams, I mean with bass. On a river possessed of a comparatively slow current I would imagine that two anglers could have unlimited sport, though I am inclined to the opinion that ordinary river fish are not so much given to the night feeding habit, at least in the Middle West where the most of my bass casting has been done. Whether or not bass resort to night feeding from choice is an open question, in my opinion the habit is born of necessity. Many a so-called bass-less lake or fished out water, may be rife with ichthyic life between the hours of 9 and 3 A. M

Of course the fish do not feed "any old place" after nightfall any more than they do at any other time during the 24 hours. The feeding grounds must be discovered. Prospecting for bass is almost as fascinating as prospecting for gold, and a whole lot more satisfactory. (I never discovered any gold, the kind that men barter soul and honor to secure, but in ichthyic gold I have long been a multi-millionaire.) Bass feed where food is found. It does not sound very wise or learned, but it is the key to successful casting night or day. Locate the schools of minnows, where insect life is born, where cray-fish

are obtainable, and there cast. The marge of weed-beds, especially where they are found fringing deep water, is nine times out of ten a good location. Sand and gravel shallows, especially where creeks disembogue or near outlets are good spots for the night caster, for they are the feeding places of cray-fish, the *piece de resistance* of a bronze-back banquet. Sometimes the angler will find the hungry fish making their way well up on the shallows, three or four of them, vying with one another to be first at the feast. To locate such a spot is to be lifted into a piscatorial heaven.

After all it is the romance of the thing, the lure of the unusual, the enticement of the night, the blandishment of the silence, which places night casting in a class by itself. Be it said, however, that not every angler can endure it, any more than every man can camp by himself in the silent places. Perhaps some are to the manner born, but most of us must cultivate a liking for the unusual. Believe me when I say that of all varieties of angling tried out by me—for romance, unusual situations and sheer piquancy, I give first place to night casting for bass. Love for it grows on one as he becomes accustomed to the all pervading Quiet—that word must have a capital letter, Caliban was right—and the stilly night sounds. In the night, frog songs and the low trill of the seldom night bird, are not noises or noisy. Even the harsh laughter of the loon, once you are in har-

mony with the surroundings, will be found to have lost some of its ghoulishness, will provoke only a smile.

Perhaps I have omitted some things which should have been said, but I have at least made a sincere attempt to give the Reader some idea of the attractivity of the sport, as well as talk tackle and methods, for my object in writing this chapter is to get you to investigate the possibilities of night fishing for yourself. It is not a matter of tackle so much as it is of knowledge and individuality. Still I must re-assert what I said in the beginning, only the best of tackle will stand up under the strain of the work, for when one can not see what he is doing he will be compelled to depend more largely upon rod and line. I need not say that the rodster will not go out of his way just to put his tackle to the test, no *angler* would do that. As the fisherman becomes initiated into the mysteries of the art he will discover many little secrets for himself, indeed he may even write an article for the outdoor press laudatory of the sport; if totally obsessed, perhaps he will follow my example and write a book.

Remains but a few remarks regarding the "sportsmanship" of the practice. I will not attempt to decide. Just why night fishing should be unsportsmanlike it is hard for me to determine, though I understand that it is so dubbed in some quarters; indeed, I am told that it has been outlawed

in some states, regarding which I have my doubts. Always this question simmers down to a matter of individuality. A sportsman will be a sportsman anywhere and always: the other kind will forever be the other kind. Laws are only an aid, they can not make sportsmen. Just how a man of porcine proclivities can gratify his lusts when following in the footsteps of gentle, genial Walton, is more than I can understand. I can and do fish the night away, violating no ethics of sport, returning as the east begins to glow, a bigger—bigger on the inside—and better man. If in this chapter I have said one word, Reader, to lead you to get out where the creative Quiet can get a chance at you, where you will forget your sordidness and littleness, I am willing to run the chances of your violating the ethics of highest sportsmanship. Selah.

CHAPTER VII

LAKE CASTING FROM A BOAT

"Lake fishing," 'tis a word to conjure with. Two-thirds of bass fishermen are lake fishers, yet the black bass is not essentially a lake fish. Perhaps the large-mouth is more inclined to a still water habitat than is the small-mouth, though both are found in swift running streams, and both are found in lakes. I suppose lake fishing is the favorite method of angling simply because, in a boat, with plenty of open water, the opportunities for casting are greater. So many anglers, so many minds, hence this chapter. It would seem unnecessary to write upon so popular a sport as lake casting, yet a few remarks upon the subject from one more or less unprejudiced regarding methods and tackle may not be out of place. I think I am open to conviction. At least I am always ready to try new tackle and new methods, so long as what I conceive to be the ethics of true sport are not violated. But, be it understood at the beginning, I do not propose in this chapter to advocate new or unusual methods, say anything original; simply, if I may, utter a few

words of advice more or less helpful to the tyro. With this word of explanation I make my bow.

I have already said that boat casting is the favorite method of fishing with the user of the short rod, and have given one reason why it is so, in a word, casting room. No brush behind, no limbs overhead, nothing to catch the lure. However, casting from an open boat, especially with a companion, is not so easy as it seems. Not every user of the short rod is an adept in a boat, particularly if he must remain seated. This being true, there must be other reasons why this method of casting is so universally popular. I think it is found in the boat itself and in the wide-reaching expanse of water. The average man loves a boat, is born with a love for the water. Wading does not wholly satisfy, he must feel the uneasy motion, experience the thrill that comes when he shoves his little bark out upon the bosom of the lake. And this lure of the wide-reaches is very real and insistent. I well remember taking a certain urban trout fisher bass casting on one of my favorite wilderness lakes. We left camp early in the morning, rowing directly across the lake to a lily bed. On the journey over my companion was strangely silent, gazing over the water with a far-away look in his eyes. At last, as we neared our destination, he heaved a sigh and remarked, "This is the first time I was ever outdoors." Every lake caster can appreciate that. It

is woefully hard for me to write of such fishing in a dry, matter-of-fact way. At any rate I insist that the lure of lake casting is found in something beside paraphernalia.

No single item of the caster's outfit is of greater importance than the boat, upon it, largely, depends the success or failure of his adventure. The ideal casting boat is stable but not heavy, and easy of propulsion; to that end it should have a pointed bow at least. I strongly incline to the skiff type, though one of the finest boats for two from which I ever cast was an eighteen-foot canoe supplied with sponsons. The regular canoe is all right for those of adequate skill—there is a thrill and joy about canoeing found in no other variety of boating—though for the reason that considerable skill is required on the part of the rodster and boatman, the craft is not recommended here for general use. Do not suppose that because a stable boat is advised I mean that the rodster should use an unwieldly craft. There are many boats upon the market, broad of keel and sufficiently light for the purpose. I am not in favor of the heavy square enders one sometimes sees at a resort, recommended for casting because of the square stern. They are hard to manage in anything of a sea, and worse, they are noisy. The ideal boat should slip through the water without a sound. I like bow-facing oars, for then I can cast from the forward end of the boat, or manage

the boat myself though that is somewhat difficult even with the bow-facing oars. With the average lake boat oars are better than a paddle, for few boatmen can paddle a skiff without creating considerable disturbance. I want quiet.

Next to the boat in importance is the boatman. I am not a lover of that member of the genus homo, the professional guide. He is too often loquacious or surly, depending upon the size of the tip, and he is apt to think that the "sport" is something of a fool as well as a gold mine. Just as you are about to cast your lure into some likely looking pocket in the lily pads, he whirls the boat about, saying in the voice of a commander-in-chief, "Cast over there: seven years, six months, three days and thirty-three minutes ago, Mr. John Smith of Saint Louis, caught a three-pounder when fishing with me by doing so." It makes no difference what your knowledge of the game, you may be an expert caster and thoroughly acquainted with the habits of the fish sought, he knows the water and has his way, for all else being equal he should be right. When resort keepers supply mutes for boatmen my faith will be restored.

Knowing the water, two casters should fish together, turn and turn about. There you have companionship and gentle rivalry, the sauce piquant of any variety of angling. The position of the boatman, or caster as you please, is a matter of importance. The caster should cover the water first, with

sufficient room to throw his lures without danger of hitting his companion. The boatman should face in the same direction as the caster, with the old-fashioned oars, *pushing* the boat along. Sometimes it is advantageous to run the craft stern first, the caster in the stern facing his field of operation. While, as I have already intimated, knowledge of the water is an advantage, yet experienced bass fans will know instinctively where the quarry lies and fishing a new water will have an added attractiveness, that of trying out theories as well as exploration.

Nothing need be said here regarding outfit, all that has been covered in other chapters. If interested in that phase of the question I recommend that you re-read the chapter on playing the fish and landing tools, which has special significance for the boat-caster. Suffer an admonition—see that the landing net is strong in the throat and otherwise dependable.

Much is written regarding the posture of the caster, whether or not he should stand up in a boat. From a red-cross view-point, no; from that of the practical angler, yes. The fact of the matter is, all depends upon the sort of craft in use and the rodster's boatmanship. It is extremely difficult to make long and accurate casts sitting down and the posture is wearisome in the extreme. Given a craft of broad keel and a trustworthy man at the oars, I can

not see why a good swimmer should not stand up now and then. I do. When alone in my canoe I often cast standing, and have never tipped over or fallen out. But the man born to some other fate will never be drowned, you know. In this connection it might be well to remark that with two in a boat, the caster should never resort to the side-cast, no matter how cramped his muscles and great the temptation. The "side-swipe," as it is sometimes called, is murderous in a boat. Always remember the lure. Never forget the boatman. A modern multi-hooked lure is a dangerous thing in the hands of a careless man or woman. Do not enter a boat with a beginner if you value your eye-sight, and do not enter a boat yourself until you have mastered the art of casting.

I have already talked of boat management, but there remain a few things which should be said upon the subject. The caster must not only be placed within casting distance of his game, but so placed that he can cast most successfully. Most men cast from right to left, finding from left to right difficult unless the cast be made over-hand, which can not be done with any degree of accuracy; therefore, it follows that the weed-bed or shore must be approached "left-handed." The reader understands what I am trying to get at, no doubt. It seems a little matter, but I will row two miles any day in order to approach the fish's lurking place

from the best casting direction. I wish to be in the bow facing the work, or if in the stern, then with that end ahead. The angler should cast in front, well ahead of the boat, covering all the water. Stand off within easy casting distance. Accuracy and control are of greater value than distance.

The angler must know where to look for his fish, and while habits of the water-dwellers differ even in adjacent fishing grounds, there is sufficient similarity always to warrant a man's casting in a certain spot, given a certain environment. To illustrate: if you see the whitened "bones" of a dead tree lying upon the bottom close up in shore, and you are bass-wise, you will never pass it by without covering every foot of its length. Cast first at the outer end and work in-shore. It is unwise to cast over a fish, though there are times when it seems impossible for an angler to frighten them, no matter what he does. A weed-bed, especially a patch of water lilies, always spells bass to me. Usually a cast made close up against them is sufficient, and there are times when to cast a weedless lure out into the little open pockets of water, well back in the bed, will bring results. Such casting, however, is difficult, for the weeds offer much protection to the fish. Nevertheless, a careful and patient angler can accomplish it. At times fish will be found upon the shallows, early in the morning and again late in the evening, then to cast with a surface lure is great sport. Where a

creek enters, or at the mouth of the outlet, are always good places. Remember, almost any obstruction will probably offer shelter to a fish, sure to if you fail to investigate. Of course, a half-wise rodster will not cast in the middle of the lake, that is the place for a deep underwater troll, either a spoon or artificial minnow.

By and large, the most successful lure for lake casting is the one that makes the most commotion, though like all rules, this is noted for its exceptions. The bass like surface lures, especially during the early hours, colors depending upon the particular water and the feeding habits of the fish. I have so often proclaimed my faith in red and white that it seems needless for me to take up the matter of color here, no one knowing me will believe that I think anything but the "red-headed wood-pecker" worth while anyway, though green in some waters is particularly good, as are the rainbow colored. The wiggling, sidewise motion gets them. However I must not fail to mention the underwaters. When bass lie deep, in other words, when they are not feeding on the surface, we must go down after them. Cast toward the weed-holes, let the lure sink and slowly reel in. We can class the artificial frog as a good lake lure, therefore it should be mentioned in this connection. But as to lures, well, re-read the lengthy chapter upon that subject.

I have already mentioned the desirability of fish-

ing at the ends of the day, the morning hours as a rule being the most successful. Correspondents often write asking: "How early should I get out on the water?" My answer is a stock one: "Before the crow crows." Get out, in hot weather, when the sky first begins to tingle low down in the east. It is worth something to see the miracle of the rising sun from the vantage-ground of a wide-reaching lake, even if you take no fish, but the true angler will take fish, understanding his business. The world is so quiet at that hour, even in the wilderness, that the fisherman finds himself in a strange realm, and if a man after Isaak Walton's heart, forgets rod and reel for a time. Just to sit, forgetful of previous existence and unregardful of the future, is one of the inalienable rights of an angler.

Next in value to the morning are the evening hours, say 7 o'clock to dark; sometimes darkness itself offers inducements, as was pointed out in the chapter on night fishing. Any wind is a good wind when fish bite. A high wind acts as a deterrent, stirring up the water and driving the fish deep down. A spell of cold weather also somehow seems to effect the fish, for they rise less freely if at all. A close, mizzling August day is the day of all days; strike that and you will have a record catch. Just before a thunder storm all fish are voracious, bass being no exception to the rule. A friend of mine, an aged angler, says, "Bass can't help but bite be-

fore a storm, even if they aint hungry." There seems to be some truth in the assertion too. But fish and the weather are exhaustless subjects, we might as well drop it here as anywhere.

Though it is time to conclude this chapter, I have not said the last word about casting from a boat, that word will never be said. I have only touched upon the subject; hoping that my suggestions may prove more or less helpful to the novice, as well as somewhat entertaining to the old hand. The heart-attractivity of lake fishing was touched upon in the previous paragraph, and inadvertently here and there throughout the whole chapter. It is the feeling of vastness, the "lift" that thrills and fills one, which sends us out upon the broad bosom of the lake. "Tackle." I love tackle. "Bass?" I enjoy a bass well fried and served, yes. But after all, and you, Reader, know how true it is, it is the getting away, the kiss of the wind, the caress of the sun, the blandishment of God's own Out-o'Doors that makes all worth while.

CHAPTER VIII

SPOONS AND HOW TO CAST THEM

That it is difficult to cast an ordinary trolling spoon with any degree of accuracy, or to any great distance, all rodsters who have attempted the feat will unanimously agree. The shape of the lure, a broad blade offering maximum resistence to the air with minimum weight, precludes even average casts and makes control almost an impossibility. A slight breeze will upset the calculations of even the most expert rodster. We can overcome the matter of lightness by adding weight, a subject to be taken up in a later paragraph, but the gyrating spoon must always present problems hard to solve. Be it said, however, it is not always necessary or even advisable to lay a long line. As I have said over and over again throughout this work, the wise rodster will never sacrifice accuracy to distance. In casting the spoon, let stealth take the place of distance, sneak up to the pools—easily accomplished with a boat, somewhat more difficult when following the bank or wading—and drop the spoon in the proper spot. The difficulties attendant upon casting the spoon

only makes the sport more attractive to the discriminating angler.

Consistently I have urged the short rod—5 foot, or 5 foot, 6 inches—now I am going to say that I have discovered a place for the 6 foot, 6 inch caster, where the latter will discount the former two to one. I hasten to add, however, that the short rod can be employed, I often use it to obviate carrying a second one. This is the point, the ideal rod should be light, willowy, though possessed of "back-bone," and at least a foot longer than the regular rod for "plugs." I have found a tournament rod almost perfect. The only reason I do not like to go on record as recommending the long rod, cut slim, is because it is not built to withstand rough usage and a careless angler may break it; for that man there is but one tool, the regulation five foot rod, built for service. Recently there came upon the market a new casting rod, with two tips of different lengths and weight, one of which should handle a spoon fairly well for a short rod.

For casting the ordinary, un-weighted spoon, I am going to recommend to discriminating anglers the free-spool reel, unhampered with spooling or thumbing devise. So light is the lure that it has little "pulling power"—coining a word to fill a need—and it should not be asked to overcome one unnecessary grain of inertia. Therefore it follows that the better the reel, more accurately ground and

fitted, the better suited it is to the needs of the man who would cast spoons. While I am recommending these delicate free-spools for this work, let not the fact that you do not possess one deter you from attempting the use of spoons; simply, the better the reel, the longer the cast, always providing you possess the requisite skill to handle the winch properly. So, too, the line should be light, as light as is consistent with safety. There is some sport in employing a line the fish can break unless handled with utmost skill, though of course it is never the part of wisdom to use a line so light that it will part at the first shadow of adversity. In this connection, allow me to say that I have played and netted a two-pound bass, using an ordinary No. 30 linen thread. While one could employ a tournament line with a deal of satisfaction, it is not wise to use a lighter than ten pound test, which, in soft braided, is light enough and fine enough to satisfy the most particular.

The reader will by this time realize that I regard casting a spoon as a sort of false fly-fishing, and to be indulged in as a fad. While this is true to a great extent, I must add that one can catch bass with spoons employed as one employs lures, indeed, it is, under certain conditions a very successful method of angling for bronze-backs. I think I have shown why light and delicate tools should be employed for this sport, always providing the rodster

is possessed of requisite skill, if not, let him employ the regulation outfit recommended for bait casting. It may be set down as an angling axiom, the lighter and more delicate the tools, the more chances the fisherman takes, the greater the sport. The fresh water angler can experience all the thrills of tarpon fishing while angling for black bass if he employs tackle commensurate with the weight of the fish. I wonder how many bass fans have ever reflected upon the following fact: the salt water fisherman goes after black sea bass, weighing from 100 to 500 pounds, with a rod weighing about 26 ounces; while the bass angler may use a rod weighing 6 ounces to capture a fish weighing 2 pounds.

I can well remember when the only spoon upon the market was the one we called the "kidney," probably because the blade had a fancied resemblance to that important organ of the human body. What angler of yesterday or the day before does not remember the "kidney spoon," and it was and is a good troll. To-day, however, there are spoons upon the market in all shapes, sizes and colors. If an angler fails to see what he wants he has only to ask for it. In shape, the spoons run from oval to willow-leaf and all intermediate forms; while the "wigglers" may be had in hearts, diamonds and what not. In matters of shape I am exceedingly conservative, doubting very much the efficiency of the odd forms, though perhaps my conservatism

blinds my eyes to their real merit. I have already confessed my faith in and love for, the old reliable fluted. I own a pair of Skinner's fluted spoons which I have used for a number of years, one of which is sans paint, almost sans feathers, and yet it still takes fish. There is something about the corrugations of the spoon which adds a glittering brilliancy to its appearance as well as steadiness to its revolutions, making it peculiarly attractive to bass.

The angler should examine the spoon he contemplates purchasing with care, see that it is well made, properly fitted, and altogether worth while. I am not inclined to regard the glass bead one sometimes sees below the loop of the spoon with favor, if the smoothness of play depends upon the bit of glass, what will happen when the glass breaks, for break it will under ordinary service. I think a metal disk or washer altogether more satisfactory. The wire should be stiff, possessed of sufficient spring to insure that there will be no unhooking under provocation. Always the spoon should be supplied with a wire leader or gimp and one or two swivels.

As to colors and ornamentations, I do not think them of supreme importance. Undoubtedly there is an added advantage in having the under surface of the blade a bright red, but that will have to be replaced from time to time, for it wears away with continuous service. I am not sure that the feathers ordinarily attached to the hooks for the purpose of

concealing them have much value, though perhaps when long and trailing they do attract fish. Again and again, in different waters, I have removed them and taken just as many fish as my companions; replaced them and taken no more. I know that in certain waters a gold spoon is more attractive than a silver one, while sometimes copper or jet black will prove more alluring than either. Much depends upon the particular water and only experimentation can determine which spoon to use. To-day spoons are provided with variously colored blades, so that the angler can change at will, though I must confess that for an all-round, every day spoon there is nothing better than silver back and red front. Keep the inside of the blade dabbed with vermilion paint. The pearl blades are very beautiful, presenting a showy appearance when seen through the water, however, I have not found them as successful under varying conditions as the old-fashioned nickle spoons. As to the durability of the pearl blades I can only say that I have never broken one and I have used them a great deal in pike fishing, surely a sufficient test for any lure.

There is a class of lures, a sort of hybrid troll, with a hook attached directly to the blade at the lower end while the leader is attached to the upper, known as "wobblers." Drawn through the water, the lure darts about with an erratic, ricochetting movement which must be discernible for a great dis-

tance, even through the fish's element. As was intimated in a foregoing paragraph, these "wobblers" may be secured in a great variety of shapes and colors, being made even of pearl, a rather frail material it would seem for a lure of the type. I think I would always re-inforce such a blade with a bit of wire running from the upper loop to the lower, which would undoubtedly interfere somewhat with the action but would be a great advantage should the blade break. In casting, the "wobbler" does not offer a fluttering blade to the wind and therefore lends itself more readily to the caster's needs. It is a good lure, good for bass, but not exactly a spoon.

In casting in a wind, or where distance must be acquired, it is absolutely essential that weight, considerable weight, be added to the spoon. Right here, let me say that the rodster must add weight with discrimination, or the troll is going to sink so deep in the water that it will engage every snag, unless drawn at a fishless pace. In the chapter upon trolling for bass I have mentioned the fact that more fish are taken upon a slow-moving spoon than upon one drawn through the water with no regard for speed, a matter which should be held in mind by the spoon fisherman. We fish for fish, after all. Buy a box of split shot and add weight, shot by shot, pinching fast to the gimp or leader close above the head of the spoon, if the swivel is

POTTERING WITH SPOONS

1-14. Types of spoons.
2 and 3. Two battle-worn spoons.
Insert "The Troller."

attached directly to the spoon and the leader to that, then just above the swivel. The ordinary casting lure weighs in the neighborhood of one ounce, once in a while slightly over, never two ounces unless in muskellunge lures. The average spoon, bass size—Nos. 4 or 5—weigh a fraction less than a quarter of an ounce. Now the caster can see just where he is at, he must raise that weight to at least half an ounce in order to handle the spoon with any degree of ease; three-quarters of an ounce would be better if the character of the water would allow, i. e., possessed of sufficient depth. It is a good idea to fix up the spoons in the house, placing them upon accurate scales every time a shot is added, know just how much weight each shot adds to the lure. Leave nothing to guess work.

There are upon the market any number of detachable sinkers more or less adapted to the spooner's requirements. A new shape of weight, with a solid and convenient method of attachment, is just upon the market as I write, and I am very sure, that with me at least, it will take the place of split-shot.

Probably it would be unforgivable not to mention the baited spoon, though strictly speaking it has no place in a work of this kind, being more closely allied to live bait fishing than to casting with artificial lures. Actually, from a purist's view-point, the baiting of a spoon with a frog or minnow is unethical. Truly there is nothing to recommend the prac-

tice, but I must acknowledge that there are times when it is *the* successful method. Quite recently I was fishing a small lake in eastern Wisconsin, known to be literally alive with large pike, and though I cast my best, not a fish did I hook; then my companion, who lived upon the shores of the lake, insisted upon capturing some frogs and using them in combination with the spoon. We did so. Rather, he captured the frogs and I used them. Just as long as the frogs lasted we took fish and as soon as the supply was exhausted the sport was over. Of course the live bait adds the requisite weight to make casting easy. However, I never could bring myself to regard the practice with equinimity, for I, too, am something of a purist. Within a year or two I hope to get out a volume upon fishing with live bait, in which I shall go into the subject as exhaustively as may be.

There remains little space in which to discuss methods, and indeed, it is hardly necessary, once the angler possesses the spoon. The methods of using the spoon are practically identical with those employed when handling other lures. Remember, I am writing of casting with a spoon and not trolling; the latter will be discussed in the following chapter. The edges of weed-beds are always likely places and should be fished out thoroughly. In boat fishing, run along within easy casting distance and cast to the very edge of the bed, wait an instant for the lure to sink,

then reel slowly in. By attaching a weedless gang to the spoon the rodster can even cast into the little pockets of open water, though he will find playing the hooked fish something of a problem. When bass are lying in the shallows, if not too open, the angler may have some rare sport casting the spoon, though the location is better adapted to trolling. Of course, a snag, or obstruction of any sort must be fished out faithfully. The secret of success in bass angling with any variety of artificial lure is found in faithfulness and attention to details.

In fishing a river from a bank, it is the part of wisdom to so maneuver that it will be possible to cast down stream and retrieve against the current, otherwise it will be necessary to reel so rapidly that the lure may be "pulled away" from the fish. Always, with a spoon, reel slowly, it is the golden rule of spoon casting, haste not only making waste, as the old saw has it, but also failing to fill the creel. Along a river sheltered by trees, it is often possible to cast a spoon on a windy day when it would be utterly impossible to handle the same lure upon an open lake. The spoon-caster will have need for all his casting skill, employing in turn, "over-head," "under-hand," and "side-swipe," as occasion may demand. Where the current sets in strongly, let the spoon down to likely looking spots, do not attempt to cast. Where the tree-branches sweep the water, work above, keeping well back from the

bank, and quietly let the spoon adventure down, even under the low-lying branches. I can remember taking three bass from a single tree-top by employing those tactics. The spoon is more of a casting lure than many anglers realize.

One of the most interesting hour's fishing in which I ever indulged was casting a spoon on a shallow lake. The time of the year was October, the "bloom" off the water and the leafless trees along the shore waving bare arms in mute protest to such late fishing, or at least so it seemed to me. The wind that kept the trees in motion had kicked up quite a sea, in spite of which, the bass were on the shallows. What brought them there I did not know, indeed, I did not stop to enquire, satisfied to know that they were present and hungry. My light canoe danced and pranced like some half broken broncho. Because of the high wind I found it impossible to get out over 30 feet of line, more often less I fear. Just how many bass I took in the hour I am not going to say; too many for a single rod I know, but the best of us err upon occasion. How the line ripped through the water and how the reel shrieked with glee! As I think back it was one of the most delightful experiences of my angling days.

CHAPTER IX

TROLLING FOR BASS

At first thought the bass-caster will be inclined to recent the introduction in this work of a chapter upon trolling, asking with fine scorn, "What business has such a chapter in a volume upon casting any way?" I answer simply, it has no business in such a book as he has in mind, but does have a logical place in a book dealing with bass and artificial lures. There are times and waters when and where trolling is legitimate, logical and successful. If the reader has but a single day to spend upon a bass water, and Fate so turns the cards that he fails with the ordinary methods of casting, will he not forget his scruples for the nonce and resort to trolling? I believe he will. I know just what it means to return after a long day on lake or stream with a creel guiltless of fish. Oh, I know that we do not "fish for fish," that it is the "lure of the Outdoors" that calls us from town, but to face our neighbors the day after the bootless excursion, ah, there's the rub. While the methods of the troller do not require the skill and finesse demanded of the caster, still, to succeed, the rodster must possess certain

expertness and fish-sense of a high order. Just to throw overboard a heavily weighted spoon and troll anywhere, is not successful trolling, and is only a space removed from the hand-line of by-gone days.

Trolling with proper tackle in suitable water is a very attractive method of angling. It is not the contemplative man's recreation, but neither is casting as for that. Both are hard work, success crowning the man who works hardest and most intelligently. Even when casting, a half hour spent trolling brings welcome relief from the strain of the former method, and sometimes the record fish of the trip. There are days when bass lie deep, and are unenticed by the splashing surface lures, even shy of the cast underwater; then to troll an underwater or spoon some 200 feet or so behind the slowly moving boat will bring "net results." With light trolling tackle, once connected with a goodly bronze-back, and only such ordinarily take a troll, the angler has all the sport of playing and netting the fish that the caster has.

Casting from a boat is seldom a one man sport, the boatman being a necessary evil, but trolling can properly be called the pastime for the man who wishes to consort with himself and yet use artificial lures. Granted that it is nice and easy and lazy to have a muscular boatman at the oars, it is far and away more satisfactory to propel the boat yourself. The rod holder, while not absolutely essential, is a

great convenience; holds the rod securely, reel up and ready for the fisherman's hand. So accoutered the angler can row about the lake—for trolling is pre-eminently a lake sport—seeking out those spots which experience has shown are the deep lurking places of the bass, his eyes taking in the beauties all about. Not much effort is required to keep the boat moving, that is about all that it should do—just move, nine-tenths of the trollers troll too fast—so the fisherman has ample time for thought and observation. He watches the wild ducks as they wheel in, the redwing blackbirds flitting in and out of the thick sedge, the edges of which should be investigated for low-lying bass, uttering half-swallowed songs the while. It is truly enjoyable.

In matters of tackle little need be carried in addition to that usually employed by the caster, or perhaps I should say, should employ, if we except the rod-holder mentioned in the preceding paragraph. The rod may well be the regulation casting rod, though if you desire, the so-called Henshall type will prove a little more satisfactory, the "6 foot-6 rod." Personally, nine times out of ten I make no change in rods. The reel is the same, though usually I employ a longer line, filling the spool full; however even this is not necessary. The lures will be heavy underwaters of color and form to meet the needs of the given water. Green is very good, perch color fine, red and white all right. Suit yourself, or

rather, seek to suit the bass. Remains to be said that there are days when nothing is so good as a regular spoon, like the Skinner fluted. I have one battered and marred by years of service and many a pike's tooth, which never leaves my tackle case save as it is attached to the end of my line. A number 3 or 4 should be about right.

In addition to the foregoing articles, do not neglect the gaff-hook, to take the place of the net-head on occasion, or lacking that, a good thick club. Pike, big pike, have a liking for a whirling spoon and the angler must needs be ready for them even if he is bass trolling. There is no way of warning them from the lure, and I do not know that I would if I could. I very seldom attach a sinker to my line, unless using an exceedingly light spoon, depending entirely upon the weight of the long line and the slow motion of the boat to keep the lure where it should be. The rodster will soon learn to govern the depth at which the lure is to travel by the oars. It is more simple than it sounds.

Weeds are the bane of the troller's life. Early in the season they are not plentiful but by August, when trolling for bass is at its best, they are everywhere where there are fish, lying just below the surface. Pretty they appear when you look down through the clear water upon them, waving shadowy hands, or standing straight and still, statuesque and unreal. However, you forget their beauty once

your troll has engaged them. Yet those underwater weeds, scientific names of which are unknown to me, are not the worst enemy of the trolling bass fisher; the large root of the water lily, even the leaf stem, is worse; might just about as well be anchored to the root of a pine stump so far as yielding or becoming disengaged is concerned. There is no weedless trolling lure worth the name. If the troller hooks up a weed there is just one thing to do, stop and reel in if he can, back up if he must, and clear the hook. I have trolled successfully in waters where it seemed to me that half my time was put in clearing the hook of weeds. Remember that bass like to lie in such submarine forests, the angler has that for his encouragement.

Sometimes, early in the morning, bass seek the shallows, gravel beds or sand banks. I have never found casting from a boat overly successful for those shallow water fish, as they may be termed for convenience; perhaps if one were to cast an exceedingly long line, upwards of 150 feet—a somewhat difficult task for most of us when sitting in a boat—they might be taken. Now, strange as perhaps it may seem to the reader, I have experienced little difficulty in taking them with a distant spoon, fluted spoon rather than conventional lure. I let out all my line, empty the spool in fact save for a few yards reserved for safety, and troll forth and back over those beds. Ordinarily there is little or no danger

from snags, the worst that can happen is to hook the bottom and that is not serious when the bottom is free from obsructions. Where the bass lie, where they come from, is more than I know, for one seldom sees them when rowing over the ground. I remember a certain lake, the upper half of which was shallow sand-bottomed, with here and there a patch of blossoming pickerel weed. One whole week I camped upon its shores, casting early and late, taking many a pike and wall-eye; still fishing with live bait for strawberry-bass, rock-bass, perch and such lesser game, though not one bass did I net save as I trolled the sand-shallows with my ancient "Skinner." One morning I took five goodly bronze-backs in as many voyages over the sands. The time of the year was August, if that will be of any satisfaction. Since that day I have often resorted to the method where the water was just right, and uniformly with success. As I look back upon the experience just narrated, it was one of the most enjoyable of my long angling life.

It is quite generally believed that August is a poor month for the angler, and from my experience I am ready to aver that when the "bloom is on the water," casting is off color. Yet there is no time of the year when the knowing and persistent rodster may not take fish. If they won't bite, make 'em! In July and August, if the season is unduly warm, the bass seek out the cool recesses amid the weeds, deep

down, there to bask and dream, taking what food a kindly Fate sends their way, really feeding on the surface only early in the morning and perhaps again at evening, sometimes only late at night. Now a spoon, or underwater with flashing blades, trolled over their lurking places, will stir them to attack. Perhaps they are not hungry, we will not open that question; to have them strike is all the angler asks. Once connected, the why of the connection is of little importance. Naturally the lure will run a-foul of the weeds many times, that is to be expected, but who would not run the chances of a "hook-up" for the privilege of taking a bass or two when the other fellows are failing? There is more or less human nature about the average angler.

Thus far I have been talking of lake fishing, for trolling is essentially a lake sport, though sometimes a sluggish river—must possess little current—will offer considerable sport to the angler who is willing to employ the method. We call this fish, "bass of the banks," though it might be termed with equal felicity, the "bass of the grassy bends." Where the marsh grass grows out into the water, to the very edge of the deeps, or the cat-tails march along, their feet thick with sedge, there bass hang out when the whim suits them. I have never been able to determine just when they preempt those spots. I have taken them trolling at mid-day with a bright sun overhead, I have taken them morning and evening,

I have found them at home when it rained gently and when a midsummer thunderstorm shook the earth with Teutonic reverberations; and I have failed utterly, absolutely, ignominiously on all these occasions. Shall we say "luck was poor," and let it go at that? This only I am certain of, hit it right and the rodster will have a morning's sport worth the name. After all, every fish is an unknown and unknowable quantity. Just as we arrive at a place where we think we know it all, they turn some new trick, evince some new habit, which knocks all of our notions into the proverbial cocked hat.

As I have already intimated, it is of utmost importance to troll slowly. If the reader has ever fished with a hand line he has undoubtedly discovered that he has hooked more fish when the boat was coming about, and if he stopped to enquire why, found the answer in the slowing up of the lure. There I received my first lesson in successful trolling. The angler needs to have his lure away down well towards the bottom, for if the fish are near the surface he will not resort to trolling, he will cast. Casting is by all odds the most sportsman-like and satisfactory; there is no excuse for resorting to the method described in this chapter when the former is successful.

If the angler can have a wilderness lake to himself early some morning, slipping about the shores and weed-beds, or seeking out the shallows, the boat

moving slowly and silently along, the long line trailing out behind, in rapport with his environment, he will bless me for the hints contained in this chapter. Trolling is not work unless the rodster makes it so; in ease it is second to live bait fishing, standing in sportsmanship about midway between casting and live bait fishing. Its attractivity lies in the opportunities it offers for thought and observation, both of which are important components of angling. That casting is hard work I have said again and again throughout this work, and by the same token, the harder you work the more successful you will be, knowledge and skill being equal. There is little value in muscle when we turn to trolling, the crown is for the man who knows the water and fish. More than once I have forgotten the tagging lure, lost in contemplation of the rising sun, or the antics of some creature of the wild in the out-reaching branches of the trees. Once I reeled in my line to follow a pair of loons, foolishly thinking that I could surprise them and secure a picture. I submit that the average angler will never become so enamoured of his surroundings as to become entirely unconscious of his lure.

The fish hooked 150 feet behind the boat is a different proposition from the fish within 50 or 60 feet. If hooked on a spoon in the shallows, he goes into the air at once, sometimes so far away he appears that the angler doubts if he is on the line at

all. None of those quick thrills which inebriate the caster comes along the line to the troller, the fish is too distant for that; and for that very reason the angler must be "on his job" or the bass will eject the lure. To keep a taut line on the broncho of the foam is something of a problem, a problem the solving of which will require all the angler's skill. Believe me, trolling successfully is not so simple a thing as perhaps I have led the reader to believe. The fish hooked deep is apt to fight there, and as every bass knows the value of any obstruction, look out for weeds. The caster will be "hung up," it is sure to happen; let him take that for his consolation, and smile. More than once I have pulled in a bass, weeds and all, simply by "main strength and awkwardness." A dangerous proceeding, it is true, dangerous unless the rodster is employing the very best of tackle from hook to hand-grasp.

There is a weedy lake connecting with Shawano Lake, Wisconsin, which was the theatre of one of my ichthyic dramas some years ago. We camped there—my wife, girl and I—for three glorious, care free days; just run away letting no one know where we had gone. Well, it was an "off-time" with the bass, we were compelled the first day to be content with yellow perch, and I am not sure but they are better pan-fish than the lordly bass, but let that pass. The second morning I stole from the little tent before the light had begun to tinge the east, making

my way out upon the silent, misty lake. With the first light I began casting, at the head, where the over-flow from Loon Lake enters, and worked around to the foot, where "our" lake disembouges into Shawano Lake. It was a dreary failure, and I was all but discouraged; but I was not completely discouraged, no true follower of Izaak Walton is ever that.

Attaching an "Expert Minnow," perch colored, I let out all the line my Meek contained, and began to circle the shore just beyond the fringing weeds. I was half way around the lake before I hooked anything, a good pike, but as I was not after pike, I liberated him and continued my voyage. I received my second "shock" where the water shoaled near the outlet. The morning mist was still so dense that I could not see the location of my lure, something like 150 or 200 feet behind. Without waiting to strike, or even touch the rod, I turned the bow of the boat toward the center of the little body of water, keeping a constant strain upon the rod by plying the oars. When I thought I was far enough from the dangerous weeds, I took the rod from the holder and prepared to fight a pike, for that lake was a great pike water and there was no question in my mind but that the fish was one of those fighting gentry. The fog fooled me, however; I was near the weed-bed upon the far side of the lake, and my capture managed to reach its shelter. Still think-

ing that it was an unusually large pike, I mentally prayed that he would break loose and not take the lure with him. Had the fish stayed in the weeds all would have been well with him, but the pull of the line was more than he could withstand. Out into the free water he came, a strange, inert and logy pike. Unresisting, save for dead weight, I reeled him up to the boat, discovering what had taken all the fight out of him. Fast to the lure and closely wrapped about the fish was a great halo of weeds as large as a bushel basket. Weeds and all I lifted into the boat, and imagine my surprise when I discovered in the midst of the weeds a 7 pound large-mouth, the largest bass save one, ever to fall to my rod. Do you wonder, reader, that I have given trolling for bass a place in "Casting Tackle and Methods"?

Just because it is "Not all of fishing to fish," and my mind is haunting that sheet of water in Shawano County, Wisconsin, known to anglers by the uneuphonious title of "Mud Lake," I am going to burden the reader with another "yarn."

Upon another occasion Wife and I were visiting the lake, for we were in the habit of fleeing to it whenever the cares of our profession became too arduous, which, by the way, was quite often during the fishing season. Well, one morning, floating idly near the shore where the conical peak of our little tent showed above the green under-brush, intent upon securing a mess of yellow perch for dinner, my

wife suddenly uttered an exclamation, lifting high above the water a small sunfish. I gazed over the side of the boat to see one of the largest large-mouths it has ever been my good fortune to gaze upon lying near the surface waiting patiently for that sunny to come back.

"Drop your hook! Drop your hook!" I hissed.

"But," she whispered, "but if I did he'd get on." Then, shades of Izaak Walton and the prioress of St. Albans! she actually turned to the fish with, "Shoo! you nasty thing, shoo!" Needless to add, the bass "shooed."

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